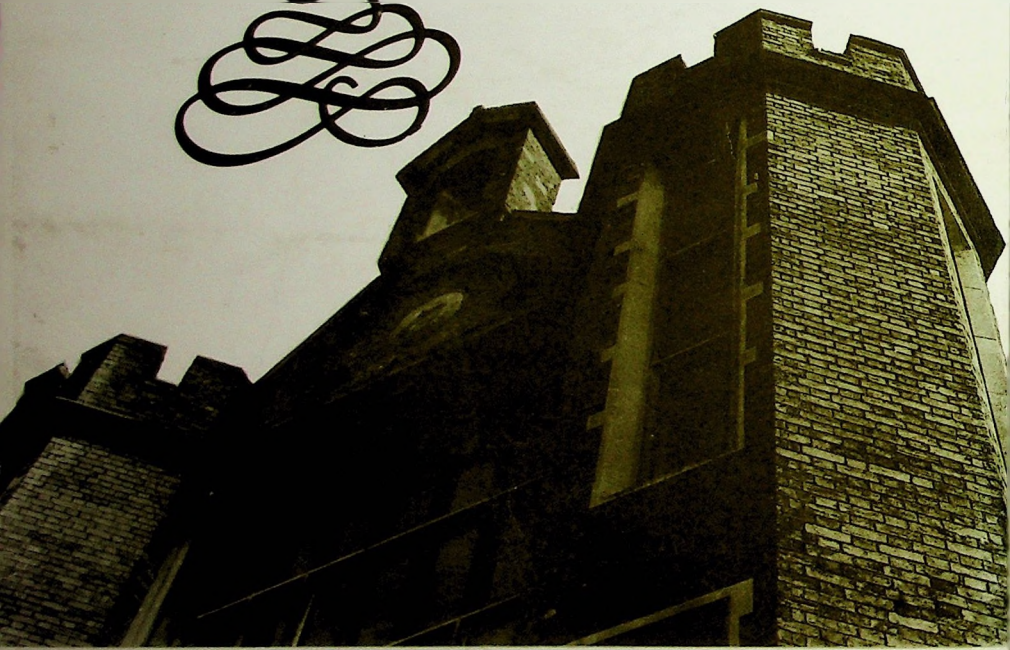


In and Out of the Workhouse



THE COMING OF THE NEW POOR LAW TO CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND HUNTINGDONSHIRE

IN AND OUT OF THE WORKHOUSE

Those who did the work

Carolyn Allen
Judith Allen
Elaine Donaldson
Margaret Draper
Wendy Foulger
Marion Last
Joyce Mullan
Stanley Peace
Reine Petch
Nanelle Scollay
Eileen Smith
Graeme White

Published by: EARO for the Workers' Educational Association Eastern District

The W.E.A.

The Workers' Educational Association is a voluntary body concerned with adult education in the liberal studies. It is non-party and non-sectarian, and receives grant-aid to support its work from the Dept. of Education and Science and the local education authorities. Courses are held in towns and villages throughout the country, and everyone is welcome. Further details may be obtained from the W.E.A. at 17 Botolph Lane, Cambridge (Eastern District office) or 9 Upper Berkeley St., London W.1. (National office).

Copyright: The W.E.A. © 1978

Designed and
produced by: EARO.
Resource and Technology Centre
Back Hill
ELY
Cambridgeshire

Printed by: E.G.M. Mann and Son Ltd.
New Path, Fordham
ELY, Cambridgeshire

I.S.B.N. 0 904463 55 9

£1.60

In and Out of the Workhouse



THE COMING OF THE NEW POOR LAW TO CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND HUNTINGDONSHIRE

PREFACE

This booklet is the outcome of a Workers' Educational Association course on "The 19th Century Poor Law in Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire", which took place in Huntingdon in the summer of 1976. Students from all over the new county of Cambridgeshire attended the course, and a dozen of them volunteered to do the research which has made the booklet possible. Three of them helped me with the writing-up.

Our purpose has been to describe the administration of poor relief in Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire in the transitional period between the passing of the Poor Law Amendment Act in 1834 and the opening of the newly-built Union workhouses. Different workhouses were of course ready at different times - most in 1837 or 1838 but St. Neots' not until 1842. We have included material on St. Neots down to 1842, and have researched on most of the other Unions for about a year after their new workhouses were brought into use. The result will, it is hoped, make a small contribution to the debate on "How Cruel was the Victorian Poor Law?" But it cannot be stressed enough that all we are covering here are the *beginnings* of the New Poor Law. The Boards of Guardians set up by the Act of 1834 continued to be responsible for the administration of relief, both inside and outside the workhouses, until 1930, when their powers were transferred to county public assistance committees. It would be wrong to treat any of the pages which follow as evidence of conditions in the later Victorian period, still less in the early 20th century.

The work has been conditioned by the availability and accessibility of source-material. This was intended as a local study by local people using local sources. So we have not been to the Public Record Office to consult the Poor Law Commission's papers, nor to the record offices of neighbouring counties to study the minutes of the Royston, Newmarket and Peterborough Unions, even though they included Cambridgeshire or Huntingdonshire parishes within their borders. The booklet is based on the early minute-books of the Huntingdon, St. Ives and St. Neots Unions, all in Huntingdonshire County Record Office, the early minute-books of the Cambridge, Chesterton and Linton Unions, in Cambridgeshire County Record Office, local newspapers - the *Cambridge Chronicle* and *Cambridge Independent Press* in the Cambridge-shire Collection of Cambridge City Library and the *Star in the East* in Wisbech Museum - and printed papers on the poor law kept in the Official Publications Room of Cambridge University Library. No records survive from the 1830s of the Caxton-and-Arrington, Ely, North Witchford, Whittlesey and Wisbech Unions, so the references to them in this booklet are drawn either from newspapers or from official publications.

Our study does not claim to be other than a very limited one. Whoever goes over this ground in future will doubtless want to make a closer comparison of relief policies before and after 1834, will probably want to extend the research to a later date, and will certainly want to consult the records which we have neglected. But it is offered as the work of W.E.A. students who, knowing nothing of the subject when they started and without previous ex-

perience of historical research, felt that this was a worthwhile project to undertake.

Our thanks are due to the staffs of the record offices and libraries mentioned above for their unfailing help and courtesy, and to the W.E.A. Cambridgeshire Federation for sponsoring the course which made the whole enterprise possible. Mention should also be made of an unpublished B.A. dissertation in the Cambridgeshire Collection, R.J. Hite: *Reaction to the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act in Cambridgeshire*, which, though no specific reference is made to it in the text, gave us some most useful leads and deserves to be better known. We thank, too, Dr. Anne Digby of Homerton College, Cambridge for her valuable comments on the manuscript: though any errors are our own.

Graeme White
W.E.A. tutor-organiser for
Cambridgeshire, 1971-77.

Note on 'The Isle of Ely'

By Acts of Parliament passed in 1836 and 1837, the Isle of Ely lost some of its separate jurisdiction and was henceforth to "be deemed and taken to be a Division" of Cambridgeshire. By the Local Government Act of 1888, however, it became a separate administrative county. In the text which follows all references to Cambridgeshire are to be taken to include the Isle of Ely, except when it is made clear to the contrary.

Conversion Table

Twelve pennies (12d.) = one shilling (1s. or 1s.0d.),
equivalent to five pence (5p).

Twenty shillings = one pound, expressed in old currency as £1 or £1.0s.0d.

16 ounces (16 oz.) = one pound (1 lb.), which is approximately 453.6 grams.

1 pint = approximately 568.3 millilitres.

1 foot = approximately 30.47 centimetres.

CHAPTER ONE

The Background

"The great increase in the amount of the poor-rates of late years, I conceive to be principally attributable to the lamentable degeneracy of the labouring classes, and to the utter want of that spirit of independence of others, and reliance upon his own exertions for his support, which formerly characterised an English peasant. There are few persons to be found, amongst the labouring classes, who will struggle to maintain their families without parochial assistance. The object with them now is, to get as much as possible from the parish; and a man whose average earnings during the year are fully sufficient to support his family, is frequently the person who receives the most in the shape of relief from the parish."

So wrote Henry Everett, who covered Huntingdonshire, the Isle of Ely and the town of Cambridge for the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws, set up in 1832.² Mounting concern at the high cost of poor relief - public assistance as we might call it today - and alarm at widespread rioting in the agricultural south and east of England in 1830, had led to the appointment of the Commission, many of whose recommendations were embodied in the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834. It was under this Act that the fearsome Union workhouses were built. Five of them survive in Cambridgeshire today as hospitals - Mill Road Hospital Cambridge for maternity cases, Chesterton Hospital and the Tower Hospital Ely for geriatric patients, Doddington Hospital and the Clarkson Hospital Wisbech as general hospitals. A sixth served as Petersfield geriatric Hospital, Huntingdon, until 1977, but has since been converted into a base for the Community Health Service and a child psychiatry clinic. Other workhouses have become residential accommodation: that at Linton is now an old people's home while those at St. Ives and St. Neots - actually located in Hemingford Grey and Eaton Socon respectively - have been turned into flats and been given colourful names: "The Limes" and "The White House". Only the workhouses at Caxton and Whittlesey, of those under study here, have been demolished; Caxton's stood next to, and immediately north of, the yellow-brick building beside the A14 called 'Caxton Court', while Whittlesey's was on the Eastrea Road, where Sir Harry Smith Community College now stands. This booklet tells of the treatment given to people in need of poor relief, in the period when the workhouses we still see were being put up.

Since Elizabethan times, poor relief to people not in work and without means to support them had been a matter for the individual parish, under supervision by the county Justices of the Peace. Within each parish, churchwardens and overseers of the poor, elected each year, had levied a rate on the

householders and had spent it in assisting all sorts of people in need - the aged, the disabled, the feeble-minded, orphans and abandoned children, and able-bodied men and women, with their families if they had any, who were out of work. By the middle of the 18th century, parishes were administering the system in many different ways. Some, for example, had their own workhouses where the able-bodied were housed and put to work; others had so-called workhouses whose inmates were incapable of work; most did without workhouses altogether. Towards the end of the century a rapidly-rising population, allied to high food prices during the Napoleonic Wars, sent the cost of poor relief soaring, and though it fell after 1818 it remained through the 1820s far above pre-war levels. In 1784 a population of 8¼ millions in England and Wales was spending £2 million on poor relief; by 1824 the population had risen to 12½ millions and the cost of poor relief to £5¼ million.

It was usual at the time to blame high costs on the practice of using the poor rates to supplement low wages - the 'allowance system', often known as the 'Speenhamland system' from one version of it devised at a meeting of Berkshire magistrates in 1795. Allowances were sometimes based on the price of bread and on numbers of children in a family, so in the period after the war much was made of the evils of the system in encouraging men to have large families and so increase the pauper population. More than this, it was thought to remove the incentive for employers to offer good wages and for labourers to work hard, because low wages would always be made up. Modern research suggests that the granting of allowances, which was widespread in the agricultural counties of the south and east in the 1820s, had only a marginal effect on population growth or wage levels, and that the main cause of poverty in this part of the country was the seasonal employment pattern: every able-bodied person was needed at haymaking and harvest, but through the winter there was not nearly enough work to be done.³ Unemployment was often disguised in rural parishes by devices such as the 'roundsman system', under which unemployed labourers worked for farmers in rotation at wages subsidised from the poor rates, or by the 'labour rate' whereby farmers found work for the unemployed and paid wages in lieu of poor rates. But like the allowance system schemes such as these only confused private employment and public assistance. Labourers found it impossible to stay in work or earn enough to remain independent of 'the parish', so many ceased to care; farmers claimed that with poor rates so high they could not afford to increase their wage bills. Everett's opinion of the "degeneracy" of the English labourer, born of habitual recourse to the parish for assistance, was a common one amongst those responsible for the preparation of the Royal Commission's Report; they felt that a way had to be found of dissuading the able-bodied man from applying for relief, so cutting the poor rates and allowing employers to pay higher wages. Added point was given to their discussions by the feeling that the agricultural workers' "degeneracy" had expressed itself in the recent riots of 1816 - the year of the notorious revolt at Littleport - 1822 and 1830. On the first two occasions trouble had largely been confined to East Anglia, but in 1830 disturbances had been widespread throughout the southern and eastern counties, with Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire seeing their fair

share of arson and machine-breaking in places as far apart as Chatteris, Pampisford, Sawtry and Buckden.⁴ It was against the background of this unrest that the Royal Commission proposed its solution to the problem of rising costs. That solution was the deterrent workhouse, to which the able-bodied and their families would have to resort to obtain any relief at all.

The Royal Commission's Report was based on questionnaires sent out to all the parishes in England and Wales (about 10% replied) and on evidence submitted by the 26 Assistant Commissioners to whom regions were assigned. Everett's comments on Huntingdonshire and the Isle of Ely have already been given; he found nearly all the parishes in his area giving family allowances to supplement men's wages, though he praised the overseers of St. Neots and Warboys for drawing moral distinctions - paying those they considered "idle" a bare minimum of relief but giving the "industrious" a bonus. On the other hand J.W. Cowell, who also covered Ely during a survey of the fens, described the parish overseers there dispensing relief without even a token enquiry into the applicant's circumstances; he gave the impression that paupers could get whatever they asked for.

"The following was given us as a specimen of the way in which applications were made and disposed of.

'I want my money.'

'How much have you earned?' - 'Four shillings.'

'How many children have you?' - 'Six.'

'Well, here are six eighteen pences for you.'

We inquired what, if the man had said he had earned nothing, instead of 4 s., they should have given him? '13 s. instead of 9 s.' We inquired if they could assign any reason why the man earned or acknowledged earning 4s. - 'None'."

He went on to say that when overseers resisted applications their decisions were liable to be overturned on appeal to the magistrates:

"A pauper named Sutton returned to the parish with his wife and child, having been away for some time, and applied for relief and clothes for himself and family. The overseers, suspecting that he possessed clothes, managed to get him and his wife out of the room, keeping his little girl in, and then asked the child where her Sunday frock was. She answered that it was locked up in a box at Cambridge with other things. Here the mother came in to call the girl out, but the overseers would not let her go, whereupon the father (Sutton) came in with a bludgeon, and seized the child by the arm. The overseers held her, but the father pulling her so as to hurt her, they let her go, and he took her out and beat

her violently. He then returned, demanding relief, which they refused. He abused them dreadfully, threatening to rip up one, burn the town etc., and behaved with such violence that they were compelled to have him handcuffed and his legs tied, and he was wheeled in a barrow to the magistrate, where they charged him with assault. The magistrate asked whether they could swear they were in bodily fear of Sutton, and they replying they were not, he dismissed the charge and ordered Sutton relief."

The Assistant Commissioner who visited Cambridgeshire outside the Isle of Ely, Alfred Power, reported the granting of family allowances in places, but also drew attention to the problems parishes had in finding work for the unemployed. He cited Linton - where a generous scale of relief had resulted in "the best fed and most comfortable and thriving population of paupers in the county" - and Bottisham as parishes where men put to work on the roads had very little to do because they were in good repair already. But Power did at least recognise the underlying problem of seasonality of employment:

"For a certain period of the year at least... there is for the whole county a surplus labouring population; as to the average degree of this surplus (per parish) or the average extent of the period, it is impossible even to conjecture... the former varying from one to two hundred men, the latter from one week to eleven months, in different places.

Again, during another portion of the year, and this perhaps the greater portion, there is undoubtedly no surplus labour, the surface of the county sufficing at this period for the employment of the whole, if fairly distributed.

Thirdly, during another very small portion of the year, namely one month of harvest, there is actually a deficiency; for, beside the labour on the spot, a great quantity of Irishmen, and labourers from the southern counties, are employed with advantage."

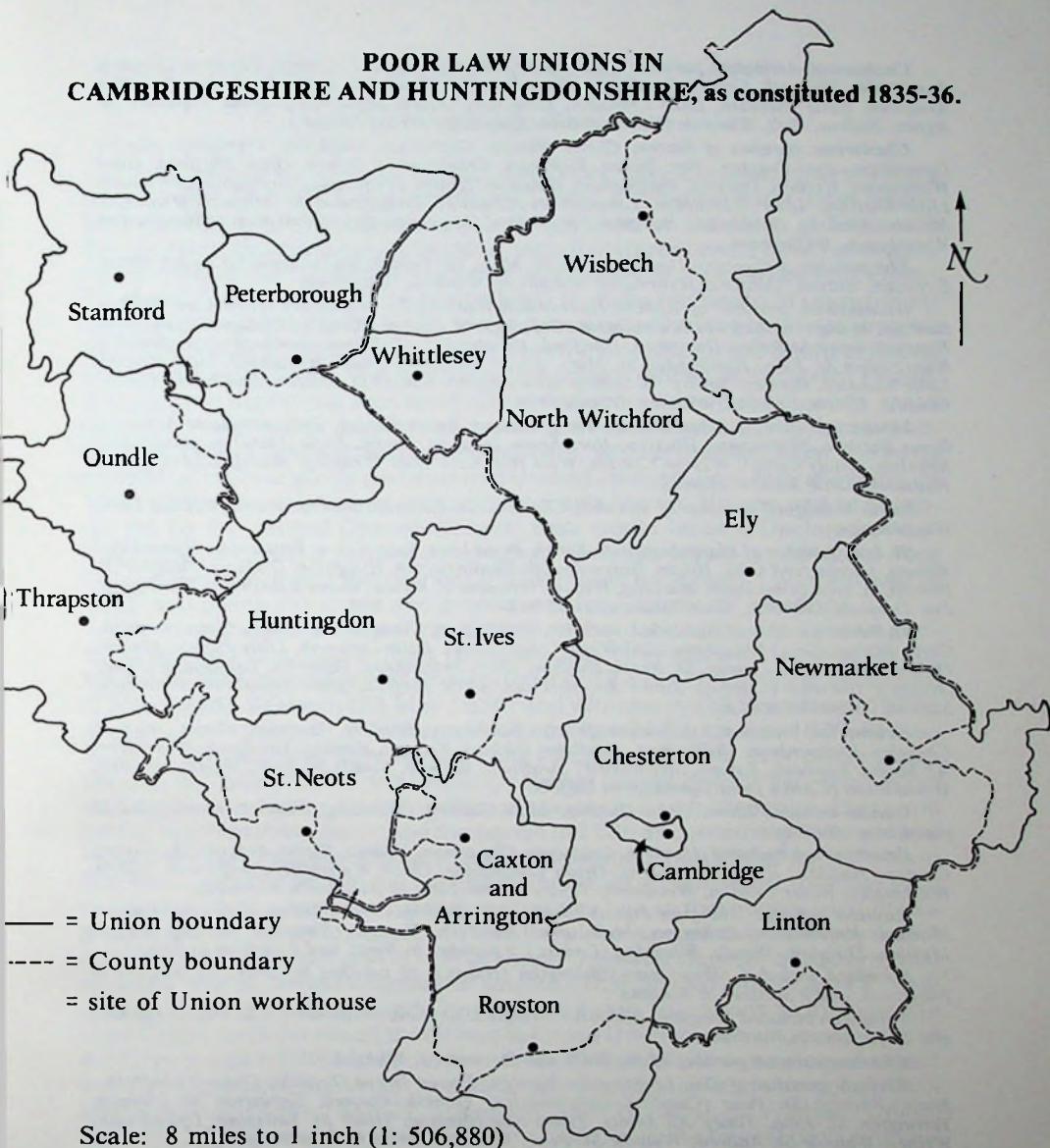
He recommended a deterrent workhouse system - compelling the labourer to save for the bad times and to leave the district if he could not - and, amongst other things, the provision of allotments and emigration schemes.⁵

The Commission's Report itself - to which the Assistant Commissioners' submissions were added in an appendix - said little about overpopulation and failed to do justice to those parishes all over the country which were administering relief with care and efficiency. It also concentrated on the problems of

rural areas, playing down the fact that in the industrial north and north-west the allowance system was not used, the poor rates were low and there was little demand for a reform of the law. The Report was dedicated to proving the case, first that any public subsidy to able-bodied men in work was self-defeating, leading the men to work less and apply for more, and second that the parish was too small a unit to administer relief effectively, whether in finding work for the unemployed or in discriminating between claimants. In this frame of mind, it recommended the abolition of poor relief to able-bodied men and women and their families except in workhouses, and proposed that parishes be grouped into Unions employing paid officials; a central Poor Law Commission would frame regulations to ensure as far as possible a uniform system of poor relief throughout the country.

The Report was published in February 1834. Six months later the Poor Law Amendment Act based upon it received the royal assent. Three Commissioners were to be responsible for sorting the parishes into Unions and issuing regulations to determine general relief policy. Within each Union, parishes would continue to levy their own rates to meet the cost of their own paupers - a parish with little or no pauperism had in theory nothing to fear from being grouped with a parish which was heavily-burdened⁶ - but administration was taken out of parish hands and entrusted to Boards of Guardians, as the elected representatives of the parishes, and their paid officials. The Act did not, however, compel the building of Union workhouses: it was up to the Guardians of each Union to decide whether to erect a new workhouse or to make use of existing buildings. Nor did it lay down a policy for granting or withholding relief to the able-bodied - the category of pauper which bulked so large in the Report - or to any of the other people - aged, disabled and so on - who needed assistance: it was left to the three central Commissioners to issue regulations on all this, and to the Boards of Guardians to put the regulations into practice. The Guardians, receiving neither pay nor expenses for their duties, might be zealous in applying the rules, or they might disagree with them and seek to evade them. The officials they employed - the workhouse masters and matrons, the relieving officers, the medical officers and so on - might be diligent in their work or they might be negligent. Though the Royal Commission had hoped for a uniform poor relief system, and though the three Commissioners would try hard to enforce one, human nature would make it impossible to achieve. Even within Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire, the Unions differed in their attitudes and in the details of their administration, and it is this variation in practice which we must now turn to study.

**POOR LAW UNIONS IN
CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND HUNTINGDONSHIRE, as constituted 1835-36.**



Composition of Unions

Cambridge: parishes of All Saints, Holy Trinity, St. Andrew the Great, St. Andrew the Less, St. Benedict, St. Botolph, St. Clement, St. Edward, St. Giles, St. Mary the Great, St. Mary the Less, St. Michael, St. Peter, St. Sepulchre, all in the town of Cambridge.

Caxton-and-Arrington: parishes of Arrington, Bourn, Caldecote, Caxton, Croxton, Croydon, East Hatley, Elsworth, Eltisley, Gamlingay, Great Eversden, Hardwick, Hatley St. George, Kingston, Knapwell, Little Eversden, Little Gransden, Longstow, Orwell, Papworth Everard, Papworth St. Agnes, Tadlow, Toft, Wimpole (Cambs.), Great Gransden, Yelling (Hunts.).

Chesterton: parishes of Barton, Cherry Hinton, Chesterton, Childerley, Comberton, Coton, Cottenham, Dry Drayton, Fen Ditton, Fulbourn, Grantchester, Girton, Great Shelford, Great Wilbraham, Harlton, Harston, Haslingfield, Hauxton, Histon, Horningsea, Impington, Landbeach, Little Shelford, Little Wilbraham, Longstanton All Saints, Longstanton St. Michael, Madingley, Milton, Newton, Oakington, Rampton, Stapleford, Stow-cum-Quy, Teversham, Trumpington, Waterbeach, Willingham.

Ely: parishes of Covey, Downham, Ely St. Mary, Ely Trinity, Haddenham, Littleport, Mepal, Stretham, Sutton, Thetford, Wentworth, Wilburton, Witcham, Witchford.

Huntingdon: parishes of Abbots Ripton-with-Wennington, Alconbury, Alconbury Weston, Barham, Brampton, Buckworth, Conington, Coppingford, Easton, Ellington, Godmanchester, Great Raveley, Great Stukeley, Hamerton, Hartford, Huntingdon All Saints, Huntingdon St. Benedict, Huntingdon St. John, Huntingdon St. Mary, King's Ripton, Leighton Bromswold, Little Raveley, Little Stukeley, Ramsey, Sawtry All Saints, Sawtry Judith, Sawtry St. Andrew, Spaldwick, Steeple Gidding, Upton, Upwood, Woolley, Woodwalton.

Linton: parishes of Babraham, Balsham, Carlton, Castle Camps, Duxford, Great Abington, Great Bartlow, Hildersham, Hinxton, Horseheath, Ickleton, Linton, Little Abington, Pampisford, Sawston, Shudy Camps, Weston Colville, West Wickham, West Wrating, Whittlesford (Cambs.), Hadstock, Little Bartlow (Essex).

North Witchford: parishes of Benwick, Chatteris, Doddington, Manea, March, Welches Dam, Wimblington.

St. Ives: parishes of Bluntisham-with-Earith, Broughton, Bury, Colne, Fenstanton, Hemingford Abbots, Hemingford Grey, Hilton, Holywell-with-Needlingworth, Houghton, Oldhurst, Pidley-with-Fenton, St. Ives, Somersham, Warboys, Wistow, Woodhurst, Wyton (Hunts.), Boxworth, Conington, Fen Drayton, Lolworth, Over, Swavesey (Cambs.).

St. Neots: parishes of Abbotsley, Buckden, Diddington, Eynesbury, Grafham, Great Catworth, Great Paxton, Great Staughton, Hail Weston, Kimbolton, Little Catworth, Little Paxton, Midloe, Offord Cluny, Offord Darcy, St. Neots, Southoe, Stow, Swineshead, Tetworth, Toseland, Waresley (Hunts.), Graveley (Cambs.), Eaton Socon, Dean, Little Barford, Little Staughton, Pertenhall, Shelton, Tilbrook (Beds.).

Newmarket included Ashley-cum-Silverly, Bottisham, Brinkley, Burrough Green, Burwell, Cheveley, Chippenham, Dullingham, Fordham, Isleham, Kennett, Kirtling, Landwade, Newmarket All Saints, Snailwell, Soham, Stetchworth, Swaffham Bulbeck, Swaffham Prior, Westley, Wicken, Woodditton (Cambs.) and 7 parishes in Suffolk.

Oundle included Elton, Great Gidding, Little Gidding, Thurning, Winwick (Hunts.) and 32 parishes in Northants.

Peterborough included Alwalton, Caldecote, Chesterton, Denton, Farcet, Folksworth, Fletton, Glatton, Haddon, Holme, Morborne, Orton Longueville, Orton Waterville, Stanground, Stilton, Washingley, Water Newton, Woodston, Yaxley (Hunts.) and 19 parishes in Northants.

Royston included Abington Pigotts, Barrington, Bassingbourn, Fowlmere, Foxton, Guilden Morden, Kneesworth, Litlington, Melbourne, Meldreth, Royston, Shepreth, Shingay, Steeple Morden, Thriplow, Wendy, Whaddon (Cambs.), 9 parishes in Herts. and 3 parishes in Essex.

Stamford included Sibson-cum-Stibbington (Hunts.), 13 parishes in Lincs., 14 parishes in Northants. and 9 parishes in Rutland.

Thrapston included Brington, Bythorn, Covington, Keyston, Molesworth, Old Weston (Hunts.) and 20 parishes in Northants.

Whittlesey: united parishes of St. Mary and St. Andrew, Whittlesey.

Wisbech: parishes of Elm, Leverington, Newton, Parson Drove, Tydd St. Giles, Wisbech St. Mary, Wisbech St. Peter (Cambs.), Clenchwarton, Emneth, Outwell, Terrington St. Clement, Terrington St. John, Tilney All Saints, Tilney-cum-Islington, Tilney St. Lawrence, Upwell-with-Welney, Walpole St. Andrew, Walpole St. Peter, Walsoken, West Walton (Norfolk).

The Cambridgeshire parish of Thorney (to the north of Whittlesey) did not form part of any Union in the early years of the New Poor Law, but later joined the Peterborough Union.

CHAPTER TWO

People and Places

The government chose as the new Poor Law Commissioners a Tory country gentleman, Thomas Frankland Lewis, a Whig barrister John Shaw-Lefevre, and a former sea captain now governor of the Bank of England's Birmingham branch, George Nicholls, who had introduced a deterrent work-house system while parish overseer in Southwell. The ambitious Edwin Chadwick, a barrister and journalist keen to make his name in government service, was appointed secretary to the Commission having helped to prepare the 1834 Report; he would later play a prominent role on the Board of Public Health, set up in 1848. The new team was given offices at Somerset House, and quickly appointed Assistant Commissioners, each responsible for a district. It was these Assistants, working in consultation with local land-owners, tenant-farmers and parish officers, who proceeded from the early months of 1835 to group parishes into Unions - aiming, generally speaking, to unite villages which looked to a central market-town. Unions had to be approved by the central Commissioners; they would issue a Declaration announcing that from a certain date named parishes would constitute a Poor Law Union, specifying the number of Guardians each parish was entitled to elect, and giving the dates and procedures for Guardians' elections.

In Cambridgeshire the first Unions to be declared were Caxton-and-Arrington and Linton, both from 18 June 1835. They were followed by Ely (25 March 1836), Cambridge and Chesterton (both 2 April 1836), North Witchford (9 May 1836), Wisbech (23 May 1836) and Whittlesey (29 September 1836). In Huntingdonshire, St. Neots was declared from 24 September 1835, St. Ives from 18 January and Huntingdon from 19 January 1836. Whittlesey was a peculiarity. Alfred Power, who having covered Cambridgeshire for the Report now reappeared as an Assistant Commissioner in Cambridgeshire, Essex and part of Hertfordshire, described the parish in 1836 as containing "a larger and more thoroughly pauperized agricultural population than any other perhaps in England", a parish where the "lavish expenditure of poor-rates, together with the operation of some very extensive charities has so thoroughly corrupted a portion of the labouring population that the place is proverbial for every sort of crime and depredation, and is said to supply a greater number of bad criminal cases for trial at assizes and quarter sessions than all the remainder of the Isle of Ely".⁷ He failed to persuade the Peterborough Guardians to include it in their Union, with the result that it had to form a Union of its own, one parish of 6,019 population (1831 census) for which 20 Guardians were elected. Apart from this, the smallest Union in population was Caxton-and-Arrington, with only 8,946 population and 27 Guardians from 26 parishes; Wisbech Union, covering 27,823 people over 184 square miles, was the largest both in population and area. As the map shows (p. 7) the Unions freely crossed county boundaries.

Under the Commissioners' regulations, a Poor Law Guardian had to be a ratepayer in one of the parishes of the Union, owning or renting property

worth at least £20 a year. Justices of the Peace were also entitled to sit *ex-officio* on the Boards of Unions in the counties they served. Predictably in a rural area nearly all the Guardians elected in the early years were farmers, though a few clergymen and tradesmen found seats as well. The urban Union of Cambridge was the exception. The Board elected for the year beginning March 1837, for example, included an attorney, a baker, a bookseller, a brewer, a coachbuilder, a cooper, a draper, two fishmongers, a florist, a fruiterer, a gunmaker, a hatter, an innkeeper, a plumber, two shoemakers, a tailor, two tallow-chandlers and the city coroner. It was not uncommon for a parish to elect as its Guardian someone who had served in the past, or was currently serving, as its overseer of the poor; of the 61 people elected as Guardians for Linton Union over the first four years of its existence, ten can be positively identified as past or current overseers of the poor, and doubtless many others would be known but for the lack of evidence.

Elections were held annually in late March or early April. All ratepayers and landowners in a parish were entitled to vote, but a sliding scale allowed the greater landowners and ratepayers a proportionately greater number of votes. Guardians were often returned unopposed; of the seventeen who attended the inaugural meeting of the St. Neots Boards on 25 September 1835, only nine had had to fight an election.⁸ On the other hand, there were fierce contests in the St. Ives Union in January 1836, between candidates pledged to vote for rival solicitors, the Tory Benjamin Greene and the Liberal G.G. Day, as clerk; Day was duly elected clerk at the inaugural meeting of the Board on 20 January, before some of the parishes had made their returns and amidst allegations that others had declared false results. Whether or not there were electoral contests, there was usually a considerable turnover in the people actually serving as Guardians; in the first four years at Linton, a Union with 25 on the Board, only three Guardians, the chairman, the vice-chairman and the representative of Weston Colville, served throughout. Attendances were also liable to fluctuate wildly - with a tendency to fall away after an initial burst of enthusiasm in the aftermath of the spring elections. Some parishes were consistently badly represented; to cite Linton again, the Guardians for Duxford, Hildersham, Hinxton, Pampisford and Sawston rarely put in an appearance in the early years.

It was normal for Guardians to meet weekly, in the Board Room of the new Union workhouses once they were ready but until then in any convenient place. The Cambridge Guardians used the Town Hall, the Linton Guardians the Market Cross in the High Street, the Huntingdon Guardians first the old parish workhouse in Priory Lane and then the Court Hall. Others met in local inns - St. Neots in the Cross Keys Hotel, St. Ives in the Crown Inn, Chesterton in the Woolpack Inn in Cambridge. The Poor Law Commissioners gave every Board of Guardians detailed instructions on the conduct of meetings and the appointment of staff. At each weekly meeting they were supposed to hear the minutes of the previous one and consider matters arising, decide what to do about applications for relief, examine the relief books, receive reports on the workhouse and give directions as necessary for the collection of rates from the parishes. The Guardians were also required to appoint various salaried

officials - a clerk to serve as secretary, a treasurer to handle the Union's funds, an auditor to check the accounts and one or more relieving officers to distribute relief. They were also to contract with local doctors willing to serve as medical officers and - to administer the workhouse - were to appoint such as from the standard list of master, matron, schoolmaster, schoolmistress, chaplain, medical officer, porter and nurse they deemed necessary.

Of all the employees, probably the relieving officers - who were required to report applications for relief to the Guardians and to travel round the parishes dispensing it - ran most personal risk. The *Cambridge Chronicle* reported in June 1836 that a relieving officer in the Henstead Union (Norfolk) had received 30 stab wounds with battering to the head and face, and a year later that a mob had gathered at Gainsborough station to throw the relieving officer into the River Trent, only to find that he had got out of the train at the previous station. There was nothing to match this in Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire, though an anonymous relieving officer complaining of poor remuneration in a letter to the *Cambridge Independent Press* of 23 July 1836 pointed out "the risk of personal affront or injury" and relieving officers employed by the Chesterton and St. Neots Unions suffered at the hands of mobs during that summer (below, p. 53). Despite this, all the local Unions for which early minute-books survive appear to have received sufficient applications to enable good candidates to be chosen; only St. Ives, which appointed George Hayden in February 1836 and dismissed him as "physically incompetent" 16 months later, was clearly disappointed in its selection.

The normal policy was to divide the Union into two or three districts, each the responsibility of a relieving officer who had to live in his district. The St. Neots Guardians appointed relieving officers for two districts, St. Neots and Kimbolton-and-Eaton, paying them each £100 per annum "to include all their services, travelling expenses, horse and horse keep", while St. Ives, preferring to save on horses by having smaller districts which could be covered on foot, paid three relieving officers £50 each and assigned them to districts based on St. Ives, Somersham and Swavesey. Chesterton appointed three relieving officers from ten candidates for the Barton, Fulbourn and Cottenham districts - though their original choice for Cottenham, Mr. Payne, refused to move from his home in Fulbourn, and their second choice, Mr. Norman, would not give up his business. Linton also chose three relieving officers from several applicants: five local men nominated by various Guardians and two Londoners, John Errington of Southwark and William Lovel described as a sergeant in the police. Interestingly, though a local man James Hodson was appointed for the Linton district, Errington and Lovel were both successful, being given the Balsham and Duxford districts respectively. Cambridge though small in area was also divided into two districts each with its own relieving officer; only Huntingdon of those we can study closely adopted a different system, appointing Edward Goodrick as relieving officer for the whole Union at £110 per annum and allowing him to nominate an assistant subject to approval. His original choice was rejected by the Poor Law Commissioners on the grounds that the man was employed in delivering letters in Huntingdon until 10 a.m. each day; so he nominated Richard Bond of Wyton as full-time assistant at

£50 per annum, only to write to the Board in January 1837 complaining of his workload and proposing a division into districts on the pattern accepted elsewhere. From then on, Huntingdon Union was divided into the Huntingdon and Ramsey districts, Goodrick taking the first at £110 per annum, Bond the second at £80.

Little is recorded about the background of the early workhouse masters and matrons, though when the St. Neots Guardians asked their Assistant Commissioner how much to pay Mr. Gibson, whom they appointed as workhouse master in March 1836, they were told that "the salaries of three of my Hertfordshire officers, who like him have been serjeants in the Guards are £80 each, with an allowance of three pauper rations daily, house and the necessary coals and candles". Gibson and his wife were engaged to run the old St. Neots parish workhouse which had been retained by the Guardians until a purpose-built Union workhouse was ready; they duly transferred to the new building in Eaton Socon in 1842. Huntingdon by contrast, because it used a number of old parish workhouses on a temporary basis and therefore employed several masters, advertised for the post of master and matron when the new Union workhouse was ready. The Guardians' minute-book records for 15 April 1837:

"Ordered that the clerk do advertise for a respectable Man and his wife as workhouse master and matron to their new workhouse. The salary for Master and Matron to be £80 a year besides such of the coals and candles and the workhouse provisions as may be necessary for their own use. The most satisfactory testimonials as to character and capabilities will be required. No person under the age of 27 or above the age of 50 will be deemed eligible. Applicants to state the numbers of their children. Application to be made by letter post paid to the clerk on or before 5 May next. Advertisements to be in the two county papers in the two next weeks and in the Stamford Mercury in the next week."

They considered four couples as candidates, but their original choice failed the medical examination; their second choice passed it, only for the husband to die in the following year.

Elsewhere, Cambridge and Chesterton both advertised for a master and matron when the new Union workhouse was ready, going through the whole process of advertisement and selection, while Linton and St. Ives appear to have simply transferred people already employed. At Linton, Mr. and Mrs. Allen were appointed to the old Linton parish workhouse in August 1835 at £50 per annum plus full board, coals, soap and candles, and stayed on to run the new Union house. At St. Ives, another Union where a parish workhouse was retained until the new one was ready, the Board's original master, James Drage, was suspended in May 1837 when taken before the magistrates on a

charge of assaulting an inmate; he was not convicted so the Guardians re-instated him, only for the Poor Law Commissioners to refuse to sanction his re-engagement and order his dismissal. So in August 1837 the Board appointed a local man, William Biggs, and his wife as master and matron at £80 per annum; they moved in to the newly-built Union workhouse in the following year. Chesterton engaged Thomas Reeve and his wife in April 1836 to run the premises they were using as a temporary workhouse, at £30 per annum with tea, sugar and the run of the kitchen; eleven months later, defeating three other applicants for the posts of master and matron of the new Union workhouse, they were reappointed at a salary of £40, with double rations to include tea and sugar if the Guardians decided to allow these to the workhouse inmates. The Cambridge Board appointed couples to keep the six parish workhouses they were retaining in May 1836: four at £12, two at £20 per annum. Advertisements in the local papers had required the masters to be "respectable married men, able to write a good hand and keep accounts" and their wives to be capable of superintending "domestic concerns" and teaching children. Thomas and Harriet Legge, who were appointed to Holy Trinity workhouse for elderly men, subsequently obtained the post of master and matron at the Union workhouse, defeating amongst others Mr. and Mrs. Stonebridge who ran another parish workhouse, and one of the relieving officers Thomas Matthews. William Barson, keeper of St. Edward workhouse for able-bodied men, was appointed porter at the new Union workhouse, and Richard Robinson and his wife, from St. Andrew the Less workhouse for children, became schoolmaster and schoolmistress. Legge was among the unsuccessful candidates for the masterships at Huntingdon in May and St. Ives in August 1837.

All the local Unions for which early records survive made some provision for schooling in their workhouses, as they were required to do for at least three hours each day by the Commissioners' regulations. The minute-books are not, however, explicit enough for us to be able to say with confidence when teaching began; various people may have been engaged on a temporary basis, and even paupers used to instruct the children, before the first recorded appointments of salaried schoolteachers were made. For instance in the St. Neots Union we find slates, spelling books and pencils being ordered in February 1837, and £2 in salary being paid to a schoolmistress in January 1838, long before the first recorded appointment of Mary Walker at £16.16s. per annum plus rations from June 1840. Similarly at Chesterton and Cambridge references to the purchase of equipment during 1837 precede the formal engagement of teachers in the following year: Thomas Cook at Chesterton in July and Richard Robinson and his wife at Cambridge in August. The first we know of schooling in Linton workhouse is an entry in the minutes in July 1837, noting the promotion of the master's daughter Elizabeth Allen from assistant mistress to schoolmistress, at the paltry salary of £6 per annum. Huntingdon appears to have had a schoolmistress on trial before confirming her appointment; Jane Carter was first appointed in August 1837 at 9s. per week plus rations on a weekly basis, but was reappointed in December at an annual salary of £15 plus rations. St. Ives and Wisbech both

engaged schoolmistresses during the following year on identical terms - £20 plus board and lodging - and as it happens both are known to have previously sent their children to local schools. The St. Ives Guardians decided in November 1836 to meet the cost of children likely to "be benefited by education", while the Wisbech Guardians in the following March resolved to pay the master and mistress of the National Schools for taking pauper children over the previous nine months.⁹ But jobs as workhouse schoolteachers were not the most attractive of posts, and some unsuitable people were appointed. John Gimson - whether a colleague or a successor to Elizabeth Allen is not clear - was dismissed by the Linton Guardians in September 1838 for inattention and neglect of duty, and in November and December of the same year the Cambridge Guardians received complaints from their workhouse master, Legge, about the schoolmaster Robinson. They resolved the matter in January by dismissing them both, with their wives; only after advertising the teaching posts three times and engaging the chaplain on a temporary basis did they eventually find suitable replacements in the following June.

The most contentious appointment was usually that of chaplain. A paid appointment offended nonconformist Guardians because it offered support to the Church of England from the rates; it could also be opposed on the grounds of expense, since it was cheaper to send the workhouse inmates to a local place of worship outside. The Commissioners' regulations on workhouses ordered that divine service should be held in the workhouse every Sunday, though paupers were not obliged to attend if their religious principles differed from those of the Church of England. In March 1838 the Commissioners bowed to pressure by advising that the elderly, the infirm, children and widows with families could be released from the workhouse to attend church or chapel, provided that they were escorted to and fro and a register was kept; but in the same directive they pressed for the appointment of a paid chaplain in every workhouse. In practice workhouse inmates had already been going out to church; we learn from the *Cambridge Chronicle* of 22 April 1837 that the paupers in St. Neots workhouse were allowed to attend the parish church on Sunday mornings. But it was presumably the Commissioners' directive that led the Cambridge Guardians in April 1838 to allow the children in St. Andrew the Less workhouse to attend their local church, in manageable numbers and under supervision.

The appointment of chaplains normally followed the completion of the new Union workhouse: Huntingdon appointed one in June 1837, Chesterton in March 1838, Cambridge in November 1838, St. Neots in November 1842. The duties of the Cambridge chaplain, Revd. John Orman of Feltwell, were defined in a letter from the Guardians to the Bishop of Ely as

"to read prayers and preach a sermon to the paupers every Sunday; to administer the sacrament to such paupers as desire it once every three months; to examine and catechise the children at least once a month and state the general progress of the children and the moral and religious state of the inmates

generally in a book to be laid before the Guardians at their next meeting."

There is nothing in the minute-books to suggest that the appointments here were controversial, though after an objection from the bishop the Huntingdon Guardians had to change the time of their morning service to accommodate their chaplain, who was also vicar of All Saints in the town. Elsewhere, chaplains were only engaged after a struggle. The Wisbech Guardians had heated arguments on the matter, mainly because some objected to the employment of a paid Anglican chaplain when nonconformist ministers were willing to serve free of charge. By the end of May 1838 the chairman had resigned on the issue, and in the following month the Assistant Commissioner - Power's successor Colonel Wade - had to come to order the appointment of a paid chaplain; despite this, and the threat of a £500 fine on the Union if no appointment was made, the decision to engage a chaplain was only taken by 13 votes to 12.¹⁰ At St. Ives the appointment of a chaplain was twice voted down in 1839 because local clergy of various denominations were already visiting the workhouse without charge; not until August 1840 was a chaplain engaged, at the above-average salary of £60 per annum. Linton advertised for a chaplain in May 1837, offering £50 per annum, but here the problem was that no-one applied; in July the local nonconformist ministers offered to take services free of charge, but the Guardians felt obliged to decline the offer under the Commissioners' regulations. An appointment was eventually made in December 1839, at £60.

Boards of Guardians kept a close watch on their staff, and could be ruthless employers. The Cambridge Guardians reprimanded the master of St. Sepulchre workhouse, James Sayers, in 1836 for not reading prayers, and again in 1837 for keeping pigs. In the same year they warned the master of St. Edward's, William Barson, for having his own shoes mended with workhouse leather. The master of Linton workhouse was another who, in 1838, was forbidden to keep pigs: he was to sell the workhouse swill for Union funds. In the same year, the Chesterton Board ordered their porter to resign because his wife was expecting a baby - they advertised for a single man to replace him - and the Linton Guardians dismissed their porter for going missing from Sunday afternoon to Monday night on pretence of attending church. The St. Ives Guardians, having dismissed their original workhouse master in 1837 on the order of the Commissioners, had to reprimand his replacement in 1839 and again in 1840, on the second occasion on a charge of dishonesty.

Complaints were also made to the Guardians from time to time about the medical officers, local doctors who, in addition to having a private practice, were under contract to treat anyone within their districts referred to them by the relieving officers. Chesterton Union, for example, was divided into five districts for medical relief, St. Ives Union into four, each with a medical officer under contract to the Guardians. Medical officers were usually appointed annually at salaries from which they were expected to meet their expenses in travelling and in supplying medicines and appliances. During 1836 the Chesterton and Linton Guardians appointed medical officers to be paid by the

case, but they opted for fixed salaries a year later; by 1839 only Ely, North Witchford and Whittlesey, of the local Unions, were paying by case rather than salary.¹¹ Most Unions invited medical men to tender for the posts in the early years, in the hope of keeping salaries low through competition; for their part, the doctors were eager enough to obtain Union contracts, despite generally-low remuneration, because private practices tended to develop as a result. But they put their professional reputations at some risk. In August 1836 the Cambridge Guardians dismissed an allegation of neglect against one of their medical officers, Mr. Cribb, for failing to visit a dying female pauper; it had appeared in an anonymous letter to the *Cambridge Chronicle*, which turned out to have been written by a rival contender for the post Cribb held. On the other hand the Linton Guardians, in January and again in March 1838, cautioned one of their medical officers Mr. Howard for dilatoriness in attending pauper patients. In the St. Neots Union one medical officer, Mr. Firnie, resigned in 1841, two others were dismissed in the following year, all after complaints of negligence. Firnie's resignation followed a report from the relieving officer that he had not given Mary Flavell, a pauper patient in Swineshead, the attention she deserved; he received a letter from the clerk to the Guardians, quoted here to show the style of the time:

"Sir,

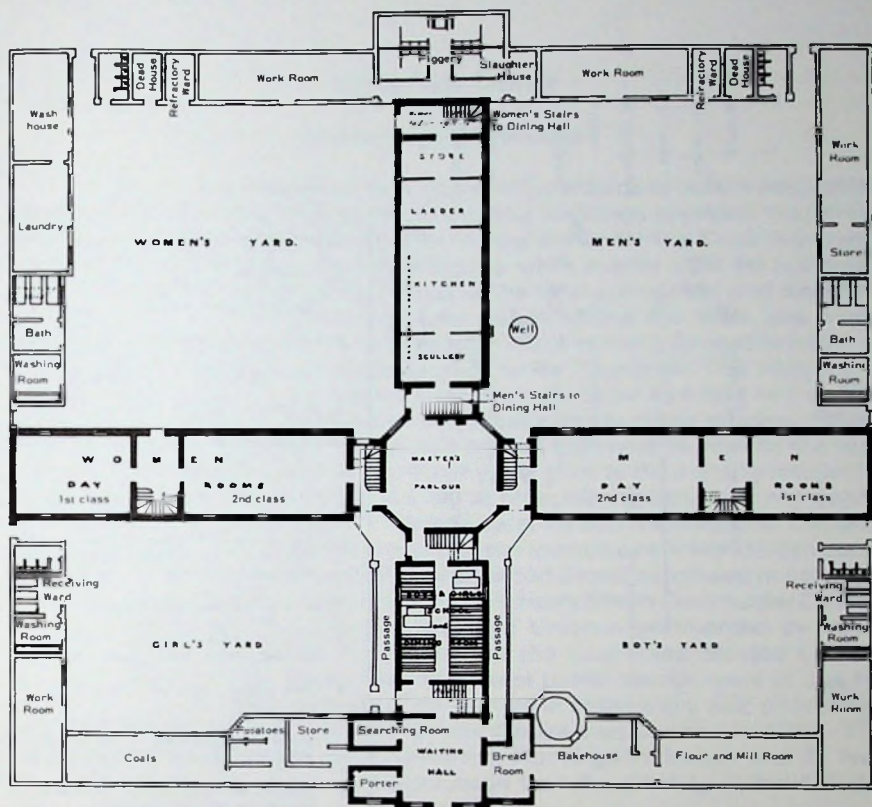
Board Room, St. Neots
May 13th 1841

I am desired to communicate to you that at a meeting of the Board of Guardians this day held complaint was made of the unsatisfactory manner in which the entries are made in your book of the paupers visited by you and it was stated by Mr. Ennals the Relieving Officer that the entries made of your having visited Mary Flavell a pauper belonging to Swineshead Parish are not correct she not having been visited by you between the 14th of April and the 3rd of May. The Guardians refrain from expressing an opinion to you in the present stage of this statement and hope that you may be able to offer an explanation of circumstances that otherwise bear so extraordinary an aspect.

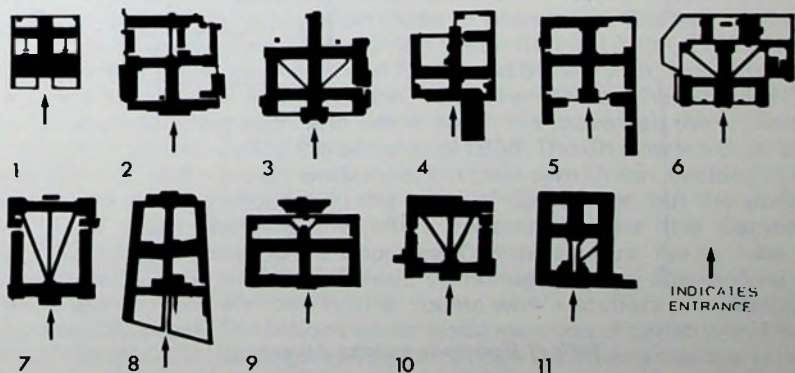
I am, Sir,

*Your most obedient servant,
Geo. Day."*

The "Guardians of the Poor" appear in this case to have lived up to their name.



Ground floor of the Poor Law Commissioners' recommended plan for a workhouse to contain 300 paupers : designed by Sampson Kempthorne (from the First Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners, 1835).



Block plans on Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire Union workhouses (from O.S. 1/2500 first edition maps, 1884-89). Key: 1. Whittlesey; 2. North Witchford; 3. Wisbech; 4. Huntingdon; 5. Chesterton; 6. Ely; 7. St. Ives; 8. Cambridge; 9. St. Neots; 10. Caxton and Arrington; 11. Linton.

	Wisbech	St. Neots	St. Ives	N. Witchford	Lincoln	Huntingdon	Ely	Chesterton	Cambridge	Caxton	
April 1835											
July						M				M ¹	D Decision to build
October						LD					I Paupers in
Jan. 1836			M								L Land purchase agreed
April	M ¹	D ⁶	MOD		TP	M				P	M First meeting of Union
July	DLP				T ⁴	L	M ¹	DM	M	T	P Plans approved
October						TP ²					T Building tender invited
Jan. 1837	T		P		5						----- Building under construction
April			T								
July											
October											
Jan. 1838											1 Actual date not known; Unions set up: Caxton 18 Jun '35; Ely 25 March '36 Wisbech 23 May '36
April											2 Plans may have been ready before this
July											3 Clerk of Works appointed August '36; builders notify completion 27 May '37.
October											4 New tenders against revised plans
Jan. 1839											5 Clerk of Works appointed 26 May '36; building complete except for broken window 1 December '36.
April											6 Original decision to build reviewed because of difficulty of finding a site.
July											7 Original contract signed 28 January '41; builder bankrupt February '41 after making a start; work restarted April '41.
October											8 Medical certificate of readiness read at Board Meeting.
Jan. 1841											9 Master moves in.
April											
July											
October											
Jan. 1842											
April											
July											
October											

Table of Workhouse Building Activity

CHAPTER THREE

Building the Workhouses

There was no compulsion on a Board of Guardians to build a new Union workhouse; they were free to adapt existing buildings provided that these were suitable for the accommodation of paupers under the Commissioners' regulations. Though the new workhouses were mostly built on borrowed money, the loans had to be repaid out of the local poor-rates: and since the avowed intention of the New Poor Law was to reduce the rates, one might have expected serious efforts to have been made in many Unions to make do with available buildings. In practice this rarely happened. The new workhouses were not in fact as heavy a burden on the rates as might be thought, since the Commissioners, who had to approve every building scheme, did not allow their costs to exceed the average annual total paid in rates by the constituent parishes of a Union in the three years prior to their amalgamation; a Union workhouse cost, in other words, at most the equivalent of one year's poor rates under the old law.¹² In Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire, only the one-parish Union of Whittlesey chose not to erect a new workhouse in the early years; here the parish workhouse in Broad Street continued in use until the now-demolished house on the site of Sir Harry Smith Community College was built in 1874. Elsewhere, Cambridge Union experimented by using several parish workhouses in the city, but the Guardians decided to build anew in 1837. The St. Neots Guardians kept parish workhouses in use for some years, but mainly because of difficulties in obtaining a site; once these had been resolved their new Union workhouse was opened in 1842. The surviving minute-books of the Chesterton, Huntingdon, Linton and St. Ives Unions imply by the absence of discussion that the decision to build had a strong measure of assent.

As we have seen, the local Unions made use of existing parish workhouses in the short-term, and several spent money repairing and altering them. St. Neots Union used the workhouses in St. Neots, Eaton Socon and Eynesbury, North Witchford Union those in March and Chatteris, Wisbech Union those in Wisbech and Elm, Linton Union that in Linton, Ely Union the two in Ely attached to the parishes of Trinity and St. Mary. St. Ives Union took over parish workhouses in Bluntisham, Colne, Fenstanton, Hemingford Grey, Holywell-cum-Needingworth and Somersham but moved all the inmates to the old one in St. Ives during the summer of 1836. The Chesterton Guardians, choosing not to retain parish workhouses in their own Union, decided in April 1836 to hire two workhouses in the town of Cambridge; but the parishes which held them declined the offer, apparently after the Cambridge Guardians had protested to the Poor Law Commissioners. So in June they hired instead a room in Bridge Street, Cambridge, where able-bodied men could be put to work, and two further rooms with a scullery presumably for other types of pauper. The Unions which made most use of parish workhouses were Cambridge and Huntingdon. The Cambridge Guardians decided to retain six workhouses in the city, but instead of admitting paupers according to their

parishes of origin introduced a classification by age and sex. St. Andrew the Less workhouse was set aside for boys and girls aged 7 to 14, St. Sepulchre for the sick and infirm, Holy Trinity for elderly men, St. Andrew the Great for married couples and elderly women, All Saints for able-bodied women and women with infants, and St. Edward for able-bodied men. Whether or not the Cambridge Guardians intended the scheme to be permanent is not clear from the minutes. They may have been disappointed by the way it worked out in practice; references in the minute-books to the presence of women in Holy Trinity workhouse and to men who could not be accommodated in St. Edward's suggests that it was difficult to maintain the classification in the face of fluctuating numbers.¹³ The scheme had been running for only a year when the Guardians decided, in June 1837, to purchase a site and build a new workhouse. Huntingdon by contrast maintained the older principle of allocation by parish. Five workhouses, at Huntingdon, Godmanchester, Ramsey, Alconbury and Brampton remained open, though the last was shut down after six months. But here the arrangement was from the start a temporary one; the decision to build a new workhouse had been taken within a month of the Guardians' inaugural meeting.

The accompanying table shows the spread of building activity for all the Unions studied in detail; it is necessarily limited by the evidence available - notably the decisions what to record and what not to record in the minute-books - but it is apparent that most Boards of Guardians decided to build at one of their earliest meetings. There was then a delay while a site was purchased, plans approved and building contract negotiated, but once under way the average time taken to complete a building was about nine months. The Cambridge Guardians were able to begin meeting in the Board Room of their new workhouse in December 1838, those of Chesterton in May 1837, Linton in December 1836, Huntingdon in June 1837, St. Ives in April 1838 and Wisbech in March 1838. The paupers moved in about the same time; at Huntingdon the various parish workhouses were phased out during July and August 1837, and at Cambridge between September and December 1838. The case of St. Ives was exceptional: finding their parish workhouse overcrowded the Guardians had to transfer some of the able-bodied men to the new one in February 1838, before it was complete. The progress of building can be illustrated by reference to two selected Unions with contrasting experiences - Linton, where matters proceeded straightforwardly, and St. Neots, where they did not.

The Linton Guardians decided on 1st July 1835, a week after their first meeting, to build a workhouse for 200 inmates and set up a subcommittee to find land. A site had been offered by the following week, and though at first they considered it too expensive, they decided to buy it for 360 guineas. The land lay on the outskirts of the town, along a lane leading from the High Street. Having found a site the Guardians advertised for a plan, offering a £10 prize to the winning architect. But by this time it was mid-August, and they decided to postpone building until the spring. In the meantime a sub-committee of the Guardians searched the workhouse field for flints which could be used in the building. As the Union vice-chairman Revd. Buller reported to Assistant

Commissioner Power in July 1836:

*"(the field) was found to be abound in stones, sand and materials applicable to the purposes of the intended building, in a degree beyond all expectation. Our actual means for the reception of paupers in the old Linton workhouse, and another house which we had hired, could not accommodate more than 110 ...Some, therefore, who in ordinary circumstances would at once have been sent to the workhouse, were employed in this field to dig materials, and received half their pay in kind...There were at a maximum about 30 of these men...they were altogether a very bad set, and gave the board no small trouble; but still this source of employment was a very important assistance at that period, and by no means without its effect in making the general expenses of the system less to the ratepayers...and the labour little less objectionable to the paupers than the workhouse itself."*¹⁴

The stones collected were used in the construction of the outer walls of the workhouse. The Board also employed men, other than the paupers, to make bricks in the workhouse field under the supervision of Mr. Hailes one of the Guardians. Even so an extra 200,000 bricks had to be bought to complete the building.

By March 1836 the Guardians had selected their plan for the new workhouse, submitted by Hallet and Newman of London. They advertised for tenders to build, but finding these all too high had to ask the architects to revise their plan so as to keep costs under £5,000. The builders retendered, and in May the contract was awarded to Woolcott of London for £3,823. 11s. 3d., after the local firm of Hailes and Ward, whose tender had originally been preferred, had been unable to promise completion in the time allowed. Woolcott's contract, signed on 30 May, survives in the Cambridgeshire County Record Office. It specified completion by 14 November 1836 - only 5½ months hence - and required the roof to be on by 14 October; the builder was to find all materials except bricks, stones and sand, was to lime-wash the interior of the building from chalk dug and burned on the site, and was to use lime from Reach, Burwell or Swaffham for the outside walls.

By October work was sufficiently advanced for the Guardians to take out insurance on the building. But on the night of Saturday 19 - Sunday 20 November came the first hint of trouble: many of the workhouse windows were smashed. This led to argument between the Guardians and the builder, the Guardians claiming that since the building had not yet been completed the

builder was responsible for their repair. They did not settle until January, when the Guardians agreed to pay for the glass, the builder presumably meeting the costs of labour. This however was a relatively minor problem; the Guardians were able to hold their first meeting in the workhouse on 29 December 1836, and the paupers moved in in the following March. Additional work done on the house during 1837 and 1838 included the erection of stables for twelve horses, the relaying of some of the floors and the installation of a mill.

It was a very different story at St. Neots. Here the Guardians decided to build a new workhouse in December 1835, ten weeks after their initial meeting, and immediately advertised for 2-3 acres of land within half-a-mile of the town. They rejected an offer of land in Eaton Socon because the owner would not sell less than 3 acres at £160 per acre, a price considered too high. Their preference was for a site on the Cambridge Road in St. Neots, but the owner Lord Sandwich would not sell. Apparently lowering their sights, they readvertised in February and March 1836, this time for a site of 1½-2 acres within a mile of St. Neots.

Not to be deterred for lack of a site, the Guardians agreed, also in February 1836, to invite plans for a workhouse, one for 200 inmates, another for 150; several were submitted for consideration, but in the meantime they made alternative arrangements by taking over three old parish workhouses, those in St. Neots, Eaton Socon and Eynesbury, in April. By October 1836 they had decided to take the St. Neots and Eaton Socon workhouses on a long lease, the intention apparently being that St. Neots would be used all the year round and Eaton Socon retained for extra accommodation in the winter. In May they also obtained permission from the Poor Law Commissioners to send able-bodied men and children to Bedford Union workhouse twelve miles away, on the grounds that this would save the expense of building their own: so from 1836 until the eventual opening of a St. Neots Union workhouse in 1842 some paupers seem to have been accommodated at Bedford, others in the St. Neots - and occasionally the Eaton Socon - parish houses.

In April 1837 a subcommittee of the Guardians again looked into the question of building a new workhouse, and in May reported in its favour. But the matter was again dropped, and it was not until September 1839 that the Guardians took their final decision to build. Once again they applied to buy Lord Sandwich's land and once again he refused. So the arguments over a suitable site began all over again, with one faction favouring a workhouse in St. Neots, another wanting one in Eaton Socon. At a meeting on 19 December 1839 15 voted for a site in St. Neots against 13 for Eaton Socon, and one of the Guardians, a local architect William Abbott who had been foremost in promoting the new building, agreed to produce plans and specifications without charge; he based these on the cruciform plan recommended by the Poor Law Commissioners and published as an Appendix to their First Annual Report (p. 17).

But the arguments over a site persisted. In January 1840 Lord Sandwich agreed after all to sell his land in St. Neots so the Guardians abandoned an alternative site in Huntingdon Street and opened negotiations with him. But

Lewis Ibbs, Guardian for Kimbolton, put a stop to this on 5 March by bringing two motions, one that the decision taken in December to buy a site in St. Neots be rescinded, the other that a new 2¾ acre site in Eaton Socon be accepted. The arguments hinged on the fact that a workhouse in St. Neots would be more convenient to Guardians coming into town for the market, but would also be a nuisance and would reduce the value of neighbouring property. Ibbs described the Eaton Socon site as "a very desirable freehold site within the distance of half-a-mile from the market hill of St. Neots...at £250 per acre, free from the objection of proving an annoyance to anyone". The chairman took Ibbs's second motion (to buy this land) first, and it was carried by 19 votes to 15; his motion to rescind the decision to build in St. Neots then passed by 19 votes to 6. What must have been a bitterly-fought meeting from 10 a.m. onwards was adjourned at 3.45 p.m.; after a three-quarters of an hour break only three Guardians returned to sign the contract for sale with the landowner Mr. Peppercorn. The Poor Law Commissioners duly approved the purchase, though the site was more expensive than that rejected in Eaton Socon on the grounds of cost four years earlier. Advertisements were placed in the newspapers inviting tenders to build, but in September (as at Linton) the plans were pruned to save money - the size of the house being reduced from 310 inmates to 250 and paving stones, iron railings and all the water closets save one being dispensed with. The contract with the successful builder, Bennett of Cambridge, was eventually sealed by the Guardians on 28 January 1841.

Even this was not the end of the Guardians' troubles, for within a month the builder had been declared bankrupt. The Board stood firm and told the two sureties to the contract that they must complete the work under the original terms. Progress was slow, but at length the building was ready for the master to move in, in May 1842. Final touches to the workhouse during that year included the provision of a clock - the Guardians were split over whether to have an indoor or an outdoor clock and it was the chairman's casting vote that gave us the four-dial outdoor clock still seen today - a perimeter hedge and additional privies behind the infirmary.

There were no major problems at Cambridge, Chesterton, Huntingdon or St. Ives, but the Wisbech Guardians had some difficulties with their builder, Freeman of Ely. He refused to start work at the beginning of 1837 without receiving a contract, which the Guardians claimed to have sent him in the previous November. It took a personal visit by the Assistant Commissioner, Colonel Wade, to persuade Freeman to begin work, and even then he asked for more time to complete it; this the Guardians refused, suggesting that he take on extra men. Freeman then asked to be released from his contract because "people had let him down"; he was visited by four of the Guardians and assured them that he could find someone else to take over the contract. This he presumably did, but as late as April the workforce was asking the Board for "something wherewith to make merry as was the custom when commencing a new building" - a request which suggests that the work had still not started. The Guardians understandably suggested that the men reapply nearer the time of completing the building.¹⁵ Although the original completion date had been set for September 1837, the paupers were not moved from the old parish

workhouses until the following March.

Only Cambridge Union appears to have had to make major alterations to the building once it had been finished; the Guardians had evidently underestimated the accommodation needed and within a few months of opening the house were having to hire one of the parish workhouses, St. Sepulchre, once again - this time for the elderly men. In May 1839 the Board contracted for various new rooms - refractory wards, boys' and girls' dormitories, able-bodied men's day-room, laundry and sheds - for modifications to the infirmary and privies, and for improvements to the drainage and ventilation systems.

The Chesterton, Huntingdon, Linton, North Witchford, St. Neots, Whittlesey and Wisbech Union workhouses all followed variants of the cruciform plan drawn up by a young and hitherto-unknown architect Sampson Kempthorne and recommended by the Poor Law Commissioners in their First Annual Report; this had, among other advantages, that of creating exercise yards - for men, women, boys and girls - in the spaces between the wings. Caxton-and-Arrington and St. Ives were devised on a rectangular pattern, the central courtyards being divided into exercise yards by partition walls, while Cambridge and Ely had more complex designs (see the block plans on p. 18). All the workhouses were brick-built, though Linton used flints and other stones in the side-walls. Local directories made little attempt to conceal their forbidding appearance: Cambridge, for example, was described as "a large commodious building", St. Ives as "a building of a plain and suitable character", Huntingdon as "a building of a plain but substantial character" with "the space in front...tastefully laid out".¹⁶ Today only Linton, with its cheerful red-brick facade, looks at all attractive. Inside Linton workhouse, now an old people's home, several early features survive to give a fair impression of what the building must originally have looked like. The builder's specification, dated May 1836, required the best rooms to have second-grade, the paupers' rooms third-grade Newcastle crown glass; some of the present glass in the windows may be original, and many windows still retain the ventilation system whereby two panes were hinged to open a trap, allowing air but not people to pass through. Local tradition maintains that all the windows at Linton were barred and that the workhouse children used to squeeze through to buy beer for the adults; but there is no mention of these bars in the original specifications. Floors at Linton workhouse were either of brick, stone or wood. The walls of the staff rooms were plastered and painted, while the Board Room had a deeper skirting than the other rooms and a cornice around the ceiling; but the walls of the paupers' rooms were merely lime-washed and none of their ground-floor rooms had plastered ceilings. The Board Room also had an elaborate hearth, which contrasted with the plainer hearths in the staff rooms, and the severely-functional ones in the paupers' rooms. In the dormitories at Linton some of the original doors also survive, complete with bolts on the outside and Judas windows to enable the master to check on the inmates after locking-up time.

Every new workhouse had to conform to the Commissioners' regulations on the segregation of inmates. By the rules sent to each Union from 1835, paupers were classified into: (i) aged and infirm men, (ii) able-bodied men, and

youths over 13, (iii) youths and boys between 7 and 13, (iv) aged and infirm women, (v) able-bodied women, and girls over 16, (vi) girls between 7 and 16, (viii) children under 7. Though the last group, the infants, could be accommodated with their mothers, and though some individuals might mix with other groups in the course of their work - as nurses or child-minders - the general intention was that each category should work, exercise and sleep apart from the others.¹⁷ Before approving a workhouse plan, the Commissioners made sure that this segregation could be maintained, and it was this that made the cruciform design, with its four wings and yards, so popular. But from the outset, Guardians were empowered to provide special accommodation for aged married couples if they chose to: "if for any special reason it shall at any time appear to the majority of the board of guardians to be desirable to suspend the above rule on behalf of any married couple being paupers of the first and fourth classes, the guardians shall be at liberty to agree to a resolution to that effect". The revised regulations of 1842 clarified the rule: "the Guardians shall be at liberty to resolve that such couple shall have a sleeping apartment separate from those of the other paupers". But of the local Unions only Cambridge, from surviving plans, specifications and minute-books, appears to have made such special provision in the early days. Eight rooms were set aside for aged married couples, each furnished with a stove and cupboard, in wings projecting at the front of the building; the forecourt between them formed the old people's exercise yard. One of these wings has survived in the present Mill Road maternity hospital, to the left of the front entrance block.

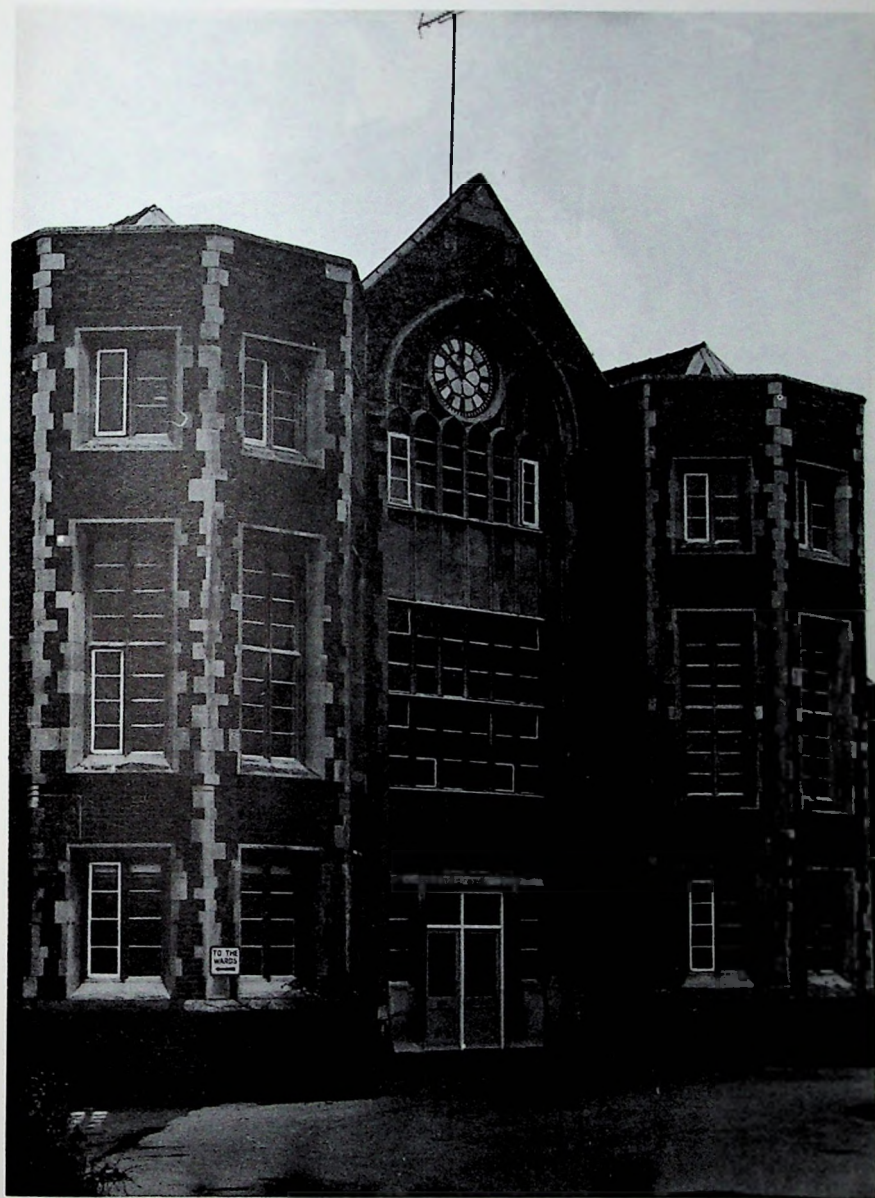
Around the workhouses stood walls, railings or hedges. The Huntingdon Guardians decided to plant a quickthorn hedge, protected by a fence and ditch until fully grown, as early as February 1837 while the workhouse was still being built, but others were more dilatory. At Linton the Board invited tenders to build a brick wall with gate in front of the workhouse in May 1837 soon after the paupers had moved in, and the Chesterton Guardians did not decide on a similar wall with iron gates and railings until 1839. Similarly the St. Neots Guardians delayed till January 1842, by which time the workhouse was nearly complete, before deciding on a quickthorn hedge. At St. Ives the Guardians voted in early February 1839 by 5 to 4 for a hedge instead of iron railings, only to reverse the decision later in the month because so few had been present. So in the spring of 1839 iron gates and railings were put up.

We have a picturesque account of St. Ives Union workhouse in Thomas Carlyle's *Past and Present*, published in 1843:

"Passing by the Workhouse of St. Ives in Huntingdonshire, on a bright day last autumn...I saw sitting on wooden benches, in front of their Bastille and within their ring-wall and its railings, some half-hundred or more of these men. Tall, robust figures, young mostly or of middle age; of honest countenance, many of them thoughtful and even intelligent-looking men. They sat there, near by one another; but in a kind of torpor, especially in a silence, which was very striking. In silence: for alas,

*what word was to be said? An Earth all lying round, crying,
Come and till me, come and reap me; - yet we here sit enchanted!
In the eyes and brows of these men hung the gloomiest
expression, not of anger but of grief and shame and manifold
inarticulate distress and weariness."*¹⁸

Much as we would welcome more evidence of what paupers really thought of life in the workhouses, it should be obvious that an account such as this, propaganda rather than objective analysis, fails to supply it. Although the reference to the railings rings true, St. Ives workhouse was built to accommodate only 200 inmates, and it is ridiculous to suggest that, just when the Earth was calling for reapers hundreds of men should be idling away their time, however severe the unemployment crisis might be during the rest of the year. And if they were sitting anywhere, it would have been in the exercise yard enclosed by the four wings of the building, and so hidden from the main road. This is an example of the invective launched against the New Poor Law in the 1830s and 40s, which has reverberated through the history books ever since. It is time now to examine more closely how paupers were actually treated in our counties, both inside and outside the workhouses, as best we may.



Wisbech Union Workhouse - now Clarkson Hospital



Cambridge Union Workhouse - now Mill Road Maternity Hospital



Chesterton Union Workhouse - now Chesterton Geriatric Hospital



St. Neots Union Workhouse - now known as 'The White House' at Eaton Socon



Linton Union Workhouse - now Linton Hospital



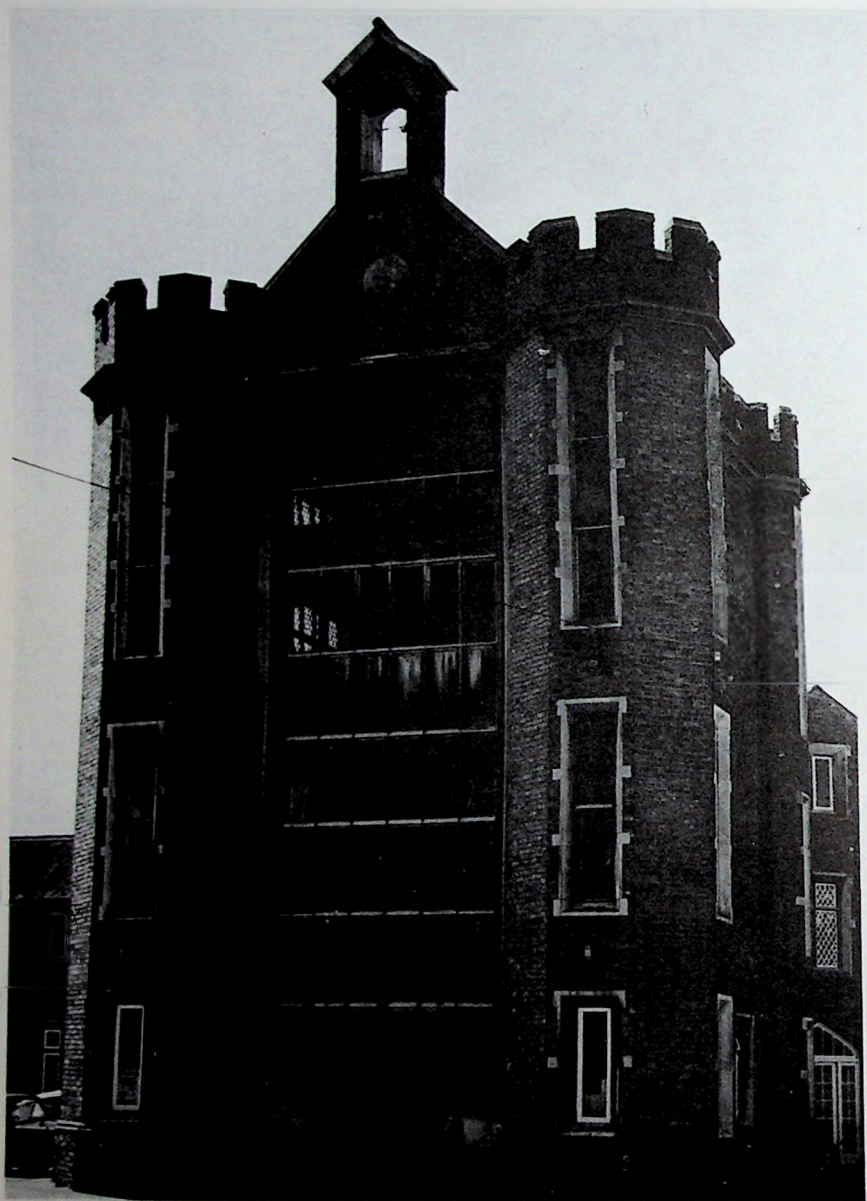
St. Ives Union Workhouse - now known as 'The Limes' and unoccupied



Huntingdon Union Workhouse - until recently Petersfield Hospital



North Witchford Union Workhouse - now Doddington Hospital



Ely Union Workhouse - now The Tower Hospital

CHAPTER FOUR

Indoor and Outdoor Relief

Although the Poor Law Report of 1834 had fulminated against the granting of allowances to supplement wages, the practice had not been explicitly forbidden in the Act. The original Poor Law Amendment bill had stipulated that allowances to aid wages would be illegal from 1 June 1835, but this had been dropped as too rigid and in its place the Act had given powers to the three Commissioners to issue regulations to individual Unions according to circumstances. The wording of the relevant clause had implied that they should move towards the eventual prohibition of relief to the able-bodied except in workhouses:

"it shall be lawful for the...Commissioners by such Rules... Orders or Regulations as they may think fit to declare to what extent and for what period the relief to be given to able-bodied persons or their families in any particular parish or Union may be administered out of the workhouse of such parish or Union...and in what proportions, to what persons or class of persons at what times and places, on what conditions and in what manner such outdoor relief may be afforded."

So the Commissioners proceeded in stages. Normally, shortly after the declaration of a Union, they issued an Order giving detailed instructions on procedure and including a prohibition on relief to able-bodied men and their families except in cases of sickness or accident, unless the men were set to parish work: at least half of this relief had to be in kind (normally bread). Once this Order began to be applied within a Union, relieving officers rather than parish officials had overall responsibility for dispensing relief, and one can think of the 'New Poor Law' as being in operation. But though the Order cut out allowances to supplement the wages of men in private employment, as well as grants to able-bodied men who did no work at all, it did not compel admission to a workhouse - most Unions did not yet have the accommodation to cope, so had to employ at least some of the men out of doors. Even with this concession, some Unions had to ask for a delay in the introduction of the new rules. Huntingdon Union, which had originally been ordered to apply these regulations from 29 February 1836, obtained postponements first to 25 March then to 25 April, though they had introduced them to some parishes before then. St. Neots obtained a postponement from 1 January to 1 February 1836, then decided not to begin until 22 February; they wrote to the Poor Law Commissioners leaving them little alternative but to issue a further Order to that effect.

Once suitable workhouses were available, whether through the erection of new buildings or the adaptation of old ones, a further Order could be issued prohibiting relief except in emergency or sickness to able-bodied men, with

their families if they had any, unless they entered a workhouse. Such Orders were sent to the Cambridge, Caxton-and-Arrington, Chesterton, Ely, Linton and Wisbech Unions on 21 June 1838, to St. Ives on 5 November, St. Neots on 12 November and Huntingdon on 20 November 1838. The final step was to extend the prohibition on outdoor relief - relief outside the workhouse - from able-bodied men, with their families if any, to "every able-bodied person". Orders to this effect were being sent to individual Unions from the end of 1839. Their terms were repeated in a General Order of 2 August 1841, issued to 454 Unions in England and Wales including all the local ones except Whittlesey. This forbade outdoor relief to able-bodied men and women, with their families if any, except in temporary sickness and for meeting the expense of funerals; the wives of servicemen, women in the first six months of widowhood, and widows with dependent children who had not borne an illegitimate child in widowhood were also allowed outdoor relief, with their families. Whittlesey had received a similar Order by April 1842.

It was recognised that no central directive could meet every case, and that some discretionary powers had to be left to the local authorities. The 1834 Act had given Guardians the power to waive the Commissioners' regulations provided that they reported the circumstances for approval or disapproval within 15 days. It was not occasional departures from the letter of the law, however, which concerned the Commissioners, but the reluctance of many Boards of Guardians to apply it in spirit. Although in the long term workhouses helped to bring down the poor-rates by deterring applications for relief, in the short term it was a more costly burden to maintain a family in a workhouse than it was to tide it over a lean spell with a grant of outdoor relief. It is being increasingly recognised that rural Boards of Guardians, composed largely of farmers anxious both to keep the rates down and to have a large pool of labour ready for harvest-time, continued in practice to allow outdoor relief to able-bodied men and their families, often under the guise of sickness.¹⁹

In the annual reports which they had to submit to Somerset House, the Assistant Commissioners said little about this reluctance and were, predictably, enthusiastic about the results of their work. Alfred Power, for example, wrote in July 1835 that "the greatest possible degree of alacrity and zeal exists on the part of the Guardians, to carry fully and firmly into effect the rules and regulations issued by your Board for their guidance". At that time the only Unions in Cambridgeshire were those of Linton and Caxton-and-Arrington, and in his report the following year he quoted two submissions, one by Revd. Buller, vice-chairman of the Linton Guardians, the other by the Earl of Hardwicke, chairman of Caxton-and-Arrington. According to Buller:

"Our progress upon the whole, as to the reduction of able-bodied pauperism, is most satisfactory. The new law did not come into operation with us till 29 August last (1835) and we have now scarcely a single application from persons of that description ... The same idle and disreputable characters, the refuse of their respective parishes,

make their occasional appearance at the Board; but they meet with constant discouragement, and the workhouse is never accepted by them but as the very last resource...With respect to the behaviour of the poor, the farmers in general bear testimony to their improvement in civility to their employers, their greater care to keep their places, and their endeavours to get their children into service."

Hardwicke pointed to a reduction in the poor rates since the formation of the Union, and stressed that they had not yet even built a workhouse:

*"We put up a hand corn-mill during the last winter, which employed 17 or 18 able-bodied men for a short time, but it was difficult to find hands to keep it at work. With regard to the condition of the labouring classes, I should say that a visible alteration has taken place in their manners; all farmers that I have conversed with say that they are more respectful and civil in their behaviour and more regular to their time of work. The parishes in this Union have never been so free from crime. The cases brought before the magistrates at the petty sessions are much reduced. In the parish of Gamlingay the saving has been enormous, and the able-bodied were during the winter employed generally, never having above from 17 to 20 out of work at any time: whereas the previous winters, for years past, have seen 100 men, on an average, receiving parochial relief...I have no doubt that by a steady and just administration of the law, taking each case on its merits, we shall next year be able to give you a report that will show a greater saving, together with a large improvement in the moral state of the community."*²⁰

This was all very encouraging, but Hardwicke's insistence on "taking each case on its merits" was significant. The tension that undoubtedly existed in these early years between several local Boards of Guardians and the central Poor Law Commissioners arose primarily from the Guardians' wish to be flexible in their administration of relief, in the face of the Commission's drive for uniformity through the issue of directives and Orders.

In practice the Boards in the Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire Unions varied considerably in their attitudes towards relief to the able-bodied in the late 1830s: some accepting the Poor Law Commission's line that all able-bodied men who applied for relief must come with their families into the workhouse, others preferring to give them outdoor relief if they thought it was justified. It is quite untrue that there was everywhere a ruthless insistence on "the workhouse" for every able-bodied man and his family who had to ask for relief. The Chesterton Guardians, asked by Assistant Commissioner Wade to give details of their outdoor relief policy, wrote in February 1838 that "the Board would not bind themselves to any particular course of proceedings, but should use their discretion according to the circumstances of the case". In December 1837 they had voted down a proposal by Wade that they regulate the granting of outdoor relief to widows, and in May 1838 when they discussed the admission of able-bodied men to the workhouse resolved unanimously to give outdoor relief where appropriate: "the Board would proceed as usual and having examined each case would give such relief as they may think proper according to the circumstances." In Huntingdon Union, similarly, outdoor relief continued to be allowed to the able-bodied; but as the Guardians told their Assistant Commissioner, Daniel Adey, in April 1838: "the Board has endeavoured to confine it as strictly as possible to those cases of destitution which have appeared to arise from causes against which the applicant could not have provided" - neatly expressing the view that it was better to take each case as it stood than to apply the Commission's regulations blindly.

In fact, in these early months of 1838 only four Unions in Cambridgeshire, and none in Huntingdonshire, were enforcing a prohibition of outdoor relief - in other words insisting on admission to the workhouse - to able-bodied men and their families. Cambridge and Whittlesey had made it their practice since the formation of the Union to refuse outdoor relief to able-bodied men, while Caxton-and-Arrington and Linton had passed resolutions to that effect in August and November 1837 respectively. But even here there was some flexibility. The Cambridge Guardians sometimes allowed families to remain outside the workhouses so long as the father went in.²¹ Linton's resolution - which forbade outdoor relief to able-bodied men, and women as well, except in cases similar to those of the General Order of 1841 - had the additional proviso that able-bodied men with large families could be helped by having a few children taken off their hands and admitted to the workhouse. And even these four Unions had to relax their prohibitions during the severe weather of January and February 1838, because their workhouses could not cope with the numbers applying;²² Cambridge put a dozen men who could not be accommodated in St. Edward's to the task of digging gravel on the new workhouse site.

It was later in the same year, 1838, that the Orders prohibiting outdoor relief to able-bodied men and their families were issued: to the Cambridgeshire Unions in June, to the Huntingdonshire Unions in November. From the time that they received these Orders, Boards of Guardians were expected to abandon their cherished flexibility in the administration of relief, and to

insist on admission to the workhouse whenever an able-bodied man and his family applied. Predictably there was trouble. The Chesterton Guardians at first resolved to do nothing about the Order, then in October to protest against it and pray for its recall. Their chairman, Peter Grain of Great Shelford, resigned rather than be a party to the protest, only to resume his seat in November on condition that the Order be adhered to as far as possible. In the event the Guardians continued to find reasons to give outdoor relief to the able-bodied; the Commissioners had to write in January 1839 about a pauper who in their opinion ought to have been offered the workhouse, and again in February to say that they did "not consider age in all cases sufficient to take a pauper out of the class of able-bodied, or out of the regulations prohibiting outrelief to able-bodied paupers". Similarly the St. Ives Guardians, debating the Order in December 1838, decided that "it is inexpedient at the present time to adopt the recommendation of the Commissioners and request the Commissioners will suspend the Order until after the 25 March next". It was a bad time to introduce a new Order, for no-one could predict the hardship of the winter to come; even the 'hard-liners' on the St. Ives Board, whose motion to accept the Order was defeated, acknowledged that "if a long blast should ensue in the following winter the Board shall then remonstrate with the Commissioners...and afford Outdoor Relief". In his annual report submitted early in 1839 Colonel Wade had to admit that during the winter past, one of food shortage and consequent high prices, several Unions in his Cambridgeshire, Hertfordshire and Essex district had applied for relaxations of the Orders: "by many of the Boards which had only partially adopted sound practice before the Order was issued the latter was received and acted upon with great reluctance, and applications for relaxation were numerous."²³

The Poor Law Commissioners had the power to fine Unions for disobeying their Orders; Unions might be charged, for example, the amount of any relief which the Commissioners deemed to have been wrongly granted. But Boards of Guardians were undoubtedly emboldened in their attitudes towards the Commissioners by the knowledge that their powers might only be temporary. The Act of 1834 had been passed for only a five-year term; in 1839 it was decided to renew it for a year, and this device was repeated until 1842 when the Act was extended for a further five years. In the late 1830s no-one could say how long the new policies and structures would last; the investment in the new workhouses made it likely that the Unions would remain, with the Boards of Guardians as local authorities, but the Commission itself was under severe trial and in the event would be replaced in 1847 by a Poor Law Board at least one of whose members was to sit in Parliament. Guardians who resented the Commission, whether on party-political grounds or because control from the centre was irksome, were at liberty to petition Parliament for its abolition, as the Cambridge and Chesterton Guardians did unanimously in 1839; Cambridge's petition complained of the expense involved in employing Commission staff, and of the arbitrary exercise of their powers without full knowledge of local circumstances. There was truth in this, but it would be wrong to assume that, left to themselves, local Boards of Guardians would all have administered the new law with humanity and equity. The *Cambridge*

Chronicle of 25 August 1838 acknowledged that "many Guardians had the shrewdness to perceive that the new bill gave them the opportunity of paying off old scores that their labourers had been running up a long while"; it can be no coincidence that Linton Union, whose parishes on average had the highest poor-rates per head of population in Cambridgeshire in the three years prior to its formation, was one of the first to adopt a resolution forbidding outdoor relief, or that the Caxton-and-Arrington and Whittlesey Unions, whose rates had also been high, should be more severe towards the able-bodied than most. It was the Commissioners' duty to intervene if they thought that local Boards of Guardians were acting irresponsibly. In March 1836 they wrote to St. Ives enclosing a complaint of harsh treatment which had been submitted to them and obliging the Board to offer an explanation. In July 1837 they sent a letter to the Chesterton Guardians, following a newspaper report that a pauper's wife - like her husband an inmate of the workhouse - had been buried without his knowledge. It was Colonel Wade who made the Cambridge Board investigate the allegation of neglect by the medical officer Mr. Cribb, which appeared in the *Cambridge Chronicle* in August 1838. And we have already seen that it was the Commissioners who in August 1837 ordered the dismissal of the workhouse master at St. Ives, after the Guardians had decided to reinstate him.



Those who had to enter a workhouse were left in little doubt that the name meant what it said. According to the Commissioners' regulations, every inmate except the elderly, the sick and children under 7 had to work for ten hours in the summer and nine in the winter daily except on Sundays; boys and girls were to spend at least three of these hours each day at school. By the original regulations, issued to Unions individually from 1835, the day began at 5 a.m. in the summer and 7 a.m. in the winter and ended after an hour's recreation at 8 p.m. Under the amended rules of 1842 everyone except the old, sick and infants was to rise at 5.45 a.m. in the summer, 6.45 a.m. in the winter and, as before, go to bed after an hour's break at 8 p.m. These rules applied both in old parish workhouses taken over by the Boards of Guardians, and in the new purpose-built houses.

Women prepared the food, cleaned the workhouse, laundered clothes, looked after the infants and nursed the sick; they also made some of the workhouse dress, issued to paupers on their admission in exchange for their own clothes. An advertisement inserted by the Ely Guardians in the *Cambridge Chronicle* of 22 April 1836 invited tradesmen to supply some items ready-made: grey cloth coats, waistcoats and trousers for the men, grey cloth and fustian jackets and trousers for the boys, shoes and worsted stockings for men, women, boys and girls, hats, caps and smock frocks for men and boys, stout twist calico and dowlas shirts, blue check handkerchiefs, and leather and iron stays. But the remaining clothes were presumably to be made up in

the workhouse, for the advertisement went on to ask for flannel for women's petticoats, dowlas and calico for shifts and skirts, cotton and linen check for aprons, and linsey, woolsey and brown stuff for gowns and petticoats. St. Ives issued an identical list in June. Children's tasks are rarely referred to, but the St. Ives Guardians decided in September 1836 that both girls and boys should be taught to knit, and the Chesterton Board in December discussed the provision of a room where the girls could be taught to sew.

The men's work was supposed to be both tedious and hard, though some of the paupers of Cambridge and Linton may have found satisfaction in their employment as shoemakers.²⁴ Chesterton hired a room in Bridge Street, Cambridge, in June 1836, where the men were required to unpick oakum - rope fibres - from old rope supplied by a dealer in Rawcliffe; he was also under contract to the Linton Guardians, but the main task here appears to have changed from oakum-picking to corn-grinding, following the installation of a mill in the workhouse in May 1838. The work was done on a commercial basis, the Guardians fixing rates for grinding barley and wheat and employing a miller to supervise. It had been decided to erect a hand-mill in St. Edward workhouse for able-bodied men in Cambridge as early as May 1836, and we learn in the following year that they were employed at it for eight hours each day; this mill was moved to the Union workhouse in September 1838. There was also a mill at Elm, one of the parish workhouses retained by the Wisbech Union, in April 1837, and at St. Ives from March 1839. Guardians also found work for men to do on the sites of the new workhouses: at Chesterton paupers cleared the site of gravel and timber, at St. Neots they weeded it, at Cambridge they spread gravel to level the yards, and at Linton - as we have seen - they dug for materials used in the building. It was exceptional to put inmates to work outside the workhouse grounds; the St. Ives Guardians resolved in June 1837 that everyone must work within the walls of the house, unless employed in sweeping the streets.

We can only speculate on what the atmosphere was like within the workhouses in the early days of the New Poor Law. The subcommittee of the St. Ives Guardians responsible for visiting the workhouse reported in May 1837 that it "appears to be in a cleanly state and well conducted; and that the inmates of all classes appear generally healthy and decent and orderly in their language and demeanour". Yet at the time their master was under suspension for allegedly assaulting a pauper, and later in the month his temporary replacement would be charged with misconduct by a woman inmate. In the following January the workhouse medical officer reported that it was so unhealthy and overcrowded that some of the inmates would have to be removed, and a year later - by which time the new Union workhouse was in use - several inmates had to be called before the Board "and admonished by the Chairman respecting their conduct". From the limited evidence of Guardians' minute-books - workhouse punishment books do not survive from the early years - it would seem that the most troubled Union was Cambridge. The retiring Board of Guardians, looking back on their year in office to March 1839, recorded "their regret at disorders which have occurred in the Union workhouse during the course of the past year, and hope of a material improve-

ment in the state of the workhouse under the arrangements of the new Master". In January they had ordered that the refractory wards be made more secure, and later in the year would order new ones to be built; they also decided in April to give women in the refractory wards special dress. Incidents in previous years had included two in Holy Trinity workhouse, set aside for elderly men but apparently admitting other categories if space was short elsewhere; one man had been taken before the magistrates in 1836 for indecent behaviour towards two women inmates, and another in the following year for assault on the workhouse matron. Also in 1837 a woman in St. Andrew the Great workhouse had been confined to the house for a month for returning drunk; another in St. Sepulchre's had been taken before the magistrates for using bad language to the master and matron. In May 1838 the master of St. Edward's had been obliged to report to the Board that men were refusing to do their work. The St. Neots Guardians, for comparison, are found in 1836 reprimanding the landlord of the Rose and Crown Inn for allowing a pauper to get drunk; he had returned to the workhouse intoxicated and had assaulted the master, for which he had been jailed for two months. In the same year the Guardians had ordered that three women in St. Neots workhouse who had complained about the bread should be deprived of their ration for two weeks. Over in Chesterton, two inmates had been reprimanded in November 1837 for begging money from passers-by. On the other hand, justice could be tempered with mercy; in January 1837 the Huntingdon Guardians took no action against a couple who had torn up some new blankets and had engaged in other "disorderly conduct", on the promise that they would behave in future.

Obviously, some individuals settled to workhouse life better than others. The *Cambridge Independent Press* of 24 September 1836 reported the 93rd birthday of Daniel Vister, an inmate of Godmanchester workhouse, now run by the Huntingdon Guardians, who was apparently quite happy: he could sing with a clear voice about a hundred songs, and was of sound mind and body. Against this, we have a report in the *Cambridge Chronicle* of 13 July 1839 of the inquest on George Triplow, a 66-years-old man who had hung himself in Cambridge Union workhouse and "had been for some time previously in a low, desponding way". But generally the combination of hard work, strict discipline, separation from family and friends, and loss of personal freedom and privacy in an enforced communal life, made the workhouse a place to be feared. The Commissioners' regulations laid down that workhouse inmates could receive visitors only by permission of the master and in the presence of the master or matron; those who entered a workhouse several miles from their homes must have despaired of having visitors in any case. It is difficult to say how far the segregation of members of a family was enforced. The St. Ives Guardians acknowledged in 1836 that in the old parish workhouse they were still using it was impossible to keep the boys and girls apart; in the new workhouse at Chesterton in 1838 married couples were allowed to meet each other at morning and evening prayers each day. But until the Cambridge Guardians moved their paupers into the Union workhouse towards the end of 1838 even minimal daily contact within a family must have been denied; their

policy of using six different parish workhouses for different categories meant that members of the same family were often not even under the same roof. On the other hand, as we have seen, Cambridge did make special provision for elderly married couples in their new workhouse, setting aside eight rooms in wings at the front of the building. Otherwise, there was no private accommodation for the inmates of the workhouses: they worked, ate and relaxed in communal rooms, and slept in dormitories, many in double beds. The Chesterton Guardians even ordered, in November 1837, a giant crib 10 feet by 3 feet, in which to put the babies.

Workhouses are perhaps best known - from Dickens's *Oliver Twist* - for the inadequate rations they supposedly fed to their inmates. In fact the diets allowed were filling, if monotonous and unbalanced; unless the staff prevented full rations reaching the paupers' tables - and there is no reason to suspect this in our area, from the minute-books or the newspapers - it is hard to see how anyone could have gone hungry. Many paupers probably ate better inside a workhouse than they had done outside. The Commissioners issued six dietaries and invited each Union to select one. Cambridge in May 1836, Chesterton and Huntingdon in June 1837, all chose number one, which ran as follows (where sexes were allowed different amounts, women's rations are shown in brackets):

Sundays, Tuesdays and Thursdays:

Breakfast: 6 (5) oz. bread, 1½ pints gruel
Dinner: 5 oz. cooked meat, ½ lb. potatoes
Supper: 6 (5) oz. bread, 1½ pints broth

Mondays, Wednesdays and Saturdays:

Breakfast: 6 (5) oz. bread, 1½ pints gruel
Dinner: 1½ pints soup
Supper: 6 (5) oz. bread, 2 oz. cheese

Fridays:

Breakfast: 6 (5) oz. bread, 1½ pints gruel
Dinner: 14 (12) oz. suet or rice pudding
Supper: 6 (5) oz. bread, 2 oz. cheese

"Old people of 60 years of age and upwards may be allowed one ounce of tea, five ounces of butter and seven ounces of sugar per week, in lieu of gruel for breakfast, if deemed expedient to make this change. Children under nine years of age to be dieted at discretion; above nine, to be allowed the same quantities as women. Sick to be dieted as directed by the medical officer."

Huntingdon, however, decided on the recommendation of their medical officers to add 6 oz. bread for men and 5 oz. for women whenever soup was taken for dinner. Within a month Chesterton had also increased the rations, raising the daily bread allowance to 16 oz. for men and 12 oz. for women and

giving $\frac{3}{4}$ lb. instead of $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. potatoes; in the following January they added 4 oz. bread on soup days.

The dietary adopted at St. Ives in August 1836 was very similar, though men were allowed 15 oz. bread, women 12 oz. on most days of the week, and the meat eaten on Sundays, Tuesdays and Thursdays was specified as beef; the Guardians originally decided to give unlimited potatoes with these meat dinners, but a week later restricted the ration to 12 oz. The minutes recording these decisions fortunately include children's diets at St. Ives as well:

Children above 3 and under 9 years of age

Sundays, Tuesdays and Thursdays:

12 oz. bread daily

Breakfast: $\frac{1}{2}$ pint milk

Dinner: 3 oz. mutton, $\frac{3}{4}$ lb. potatoes

Supper: $\frac{1}{2}$ pint milk

Mondays and Fridays:

12 oz. bread daily

Breakfast: $\frac{1}{2}$ pint milk

Dinner: 7 oz. suet pudding

Supper: $\frac{1}{2}$ pint milk

Wednesdays and Saturdays:

12 oz. bread daily

Breakfast: $\frac{1}{2}$ pint milk

Dinner: 7 oz. rice pudding

Supper: $\frac{1}{2}$ pint milk

Children under 3 years of age

Sundays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays:

10 oz. bread daily

Breakfast: $\frac{1}{2}$ pint milk

Dinner: 12 oz. mutton broth and rice

Supper: $\frac{1}{2}$ pint milk

Mondays and Fridays:

10 oz. bread daily

Breakfast: $\frac{1}{2}$ pint milk

Dinner: 5 oz. suet pudding

Supper: $\frac{1}{2}$ pint milk

Wednesdays:

10 oz. bread daily

Breakfast: $\frac{1}{2}$ pint milk

Dinner: 7 oz. rice pudding

Supper: $\frac{1}{2}$ pint milk

A further entry relates to the elderly and sick:

"every person of the age of 60 or upwards be allowed 1 oz. of tea, 5 oz. of butter and 7 oz. of sugar per week in lieu of gruel for breakfast. Sick people to be dieted as directed by the Medical Officer."

If the children drank milk and the elderly tea - already familiar to poor families by the late 18th century - the able-bodied adults were supposed to drink water: alcoholic drinks were forbidden to paupers in workhouses, under the Poor Law Amendment Act and again under the Commissioners' regulations, except by direction of a medical officer. Despite this the St. Ives Guardians resolved in June 1837 to give men over 60 a pint of beer a day; in November 1838 they received a letter from the Commissioners reminding them that a medical officer ought to approve every case. The Cambridge Board went further. In May 1836 they recommended that every man and woman in their workhouse receive a pint of beer a day, and in December 1838 two Guardians proposed that the master of the new workhouse should give beer to paupers at work; Assistant Commissioner Wade intervened on this occasion, insisting that by the regulations medical officers "are not empowered to order Ale etc. to persons not in ill-health". Other decisions at Cambridge concerned the soup: in August 1836 children were supplied with pudding instead of soup because the medical officer thought it better for them, in March 1837 a man and a woman were allowed a pint of milk instead of soup whenever it was served, and in June 1839 it was decided to abandon soup altogether between March and September because of "the injurious tendency of soup during the summer". Special concessions included an allowance of tea to Thomas Graves in July 1837 on condition that he did not go beyond the bounds of the workhouse, and permission to Robert Stubbings in September of the same year to have Sunday dinner with Mr. Fuller, the cook at Trinity Hall, provided that he was back in the workhouse by 5 p.m. Whatever lay behind this curious decision, it is enough to show that Guardians were prepared to treat individual cases with sympathy.

Occasionally the standard diet was abandoned for more sumptuous fare. Cambridge, Linton and St. Neots all provided special Christmas dinners of beef, plum pudding and beer, and St. Neots is known to have included tobacco and snuff in 1838 - though two years later the able-bodied inmates here had the vicar to thank for successfully appealing against a decision to restrict the special dinner to the aged, the infirm and the children. The Wisbech Guardians gave their inmates beef and plum pudding in May 1837 for Victoria's 21st birthday; a year later her coronation was celebrated at St. Ives, where the inmates were given a special "entertainment", and at Cambridge, where the paupers were allowed out of the workhouse to attend the festivities on Parker's Piece. Other Unions may have celebrated special occasions without recording the decisions to do so. The Chesterton Guardians, for example, wrote to the Poor Law Commissioners just before Christmas 1838 asking how to charge beer and other extras to their constituent parishes. It may be that, because the cost of festivities was sometimes met from donations, no refer-

ence was made to them in the minutes: the Huntingdon Guardians are known to have had a collecting-box at the new workhouse, the proceeds of which could be used "to buy snuff and other little extras for deserving or aged inmates".

For all this, most paupers must have been glad to walk out of a workhouse if the opportunity arose. According to the regulations issued in 1835, any pauper was free to leave on giving the master three hours' notice; the families of able-bodied men and women were obliged to accompany them if they decided to go. In practice the rule must have been applied flexibly, and the amended regulations of 1842 recognised this: "three hours' previous notice" became "reasonable notice", masters were allowed to let children under 15 out of the workhouse for supervised exercise, and even adults could be given temporary leave of absence "for some urgent or special reason". Despite this the workhouses were supposed to be secure against unauthorised departures; Chesterton workhouse had glass put along the top of the perimeter wall at the turn of 1837-38, and a year later the Cambridge Guardians had to consult their architect about the best way of preventing escapes over a low wall. More serious to Unions' funds were cases of paupers leaving with their workhouse dress; magistrates were considering such cases from Chesterton and St. Neots in 1838. The Cambridge Guardians, on the other hand, frequently gave permission to inmates to take their workhouse dress with them - as a start to their newly-independent lives. Similarly the Wisbech Guardians in 1837 agreed that able-bodied men in Elm workhouse could take away their workhouse clothes, provided that they worked out their value at the mill before they left. Two examples from the St. Ives minute-book show the help Guardians might give, in the hope that the paupers would not burden the rates again. In September 1837 Martha Keeling of St. Ives and her three children were discharged from the workhouse and had their fare paid to Leicester, where she had found a job. In August 1838 John Burgess of Bluntisham was discharged "a situation having been procured for him", and was allowed to keep his workhouse clothes. Occasionally children left the workhouse after the Guardians had found them an apprenticeship: in August 1837 the Huntingdon Board agreed to discharge a boy and allow him to take his workhouse clothes, so that he could be apprenticed for three years to a waterman in St. Ives - though his departure was postponed when he was found to be suffering from scald-head. Others left the workhouse in less fortunate circumstances: for a lunatic asylum or a graveyard. The local Unions mostly used the asylums at Bedford and Hoxton, sending paupers who had been certified as dangerous by the medical officer: though because of the expense of maintenance in an asylum, Guardians preferred to keep lunatics in their own workhouses if possible. A full list of insane paupers inserted in the Huntingdon minute-book in January 1837 shows only two incurable lunatics in an asylum, against four incurable lunatics and six idiots under the care of the Guardians. Those who died in a workhouse were taken for burial to their home parish, the Union meeting all the costs. The Cambridge Guardians decided in 1837 that their workhouse masters must attend the funerals of all their inmates, but this was scarcely practicable in the widespread rural Unions elsewhere.

★ ★ ★

It is easy to forget, amidst the deep concern about them expressed in the 1834 Report, in the Poor Law Amendment Act and in the Commissioners' successive Orders, that the able-bodied and their families were in fact only a minority of those who applied for poor relief. The Report had had very little to say about the 'impotent poor', those who were too old, too young, too sick or for any other reason were unfit to work; it was accepted that they were entitled to relief and that there was little a change of administrative structures or policies could do to diminish the burden they imposed on the rates. Alfred Power, in his evidence for the 1834 Report, reckoned that nearly half the poor-rates in Cambridgeshire were spent on "relief to the aged, impotent, widows and children unable to work", against about a quarter on men put to parish work and less than one-sixth on family allowances to men in private employment.²⁵ Neither the Amendment Act nor the subsequent Commissioners' regulations infringed customary principles governing relief to the 'impotent': they continued as before to receive outdoor relief, but in practice were liable to resort to the workhouse when there was no-one else to look after them. It must be stressed that, despite the publicity given to the Union workhouses, in the 1830s and ever since, there were always far more people in receipt of relief outside than in. Comparative figures for Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire showing the numbers on indoor relief - inside the workhouses - and outdoor relief in the quarters ending 25 March 1839 and 25 March 1840 are instructive:

County or Country	No. of Unions	Population of the Unions, 1831 census	No. of paupers in quarter to Lady Day 1839		total	No. of paupers in quarter to Lady Day 1840		total	% of total population relieved in quarter to Lady Day 1840
			in	out		in	out		
Cambs	9*	149,023*	2,938	12,455	15,393	2,374	12,923	15,297	10%
Hunts	3	50,500	643	5,151	5,794	554	4,638	5,192	10%
England	524	10,271,984	123,426	712,818	836,244	134,583	747,387	881,970	8.6%

* includes Newmarket Union

The figure of 10% of the total population relieved puts our counties joint-tenth in the table of English counties, behind others engaged in agriculture such as Wiltshire (14%), Buckinghamshire (12%) and Suffolk (11%), on a par with Norfolk and Leicestershire, above Herefordshire, Northamptonshire and Berkshire (all on 9%) and the manufacturing districts generally.²⁶

The imbalance between those on indoor and those on outdoor relief would remain throughout the century, though there was a general tendency for the numbers of indoor relief to increase as workhouses became accepted as asylums for the aged, the infirm, orphans and others who could not look after themselves. In the early years, the proportion of 'impotent poor' admitted to the workhouses was fairly small: of the admissions to the Cambridge Union's workhouses recorded in the third and fourth minute-books between September 1837 and December 1838, 44% were of able-bodied adults between 14 and 60 years of age, 28% of children between 7 and 14, 14% of children under 7, only 14% of the sick and of men and women over 60.

The normal procedure in applying for relief under the New Poor Law was to approach the relieving officer for the district, who would arrange for the case to be considered at the next Board of Guardians meeting; both the applicant and the relieving officer were supposed to be present at the hearing. The Board might issue an order for the workhouse, or it might order the grant of outdoor relief at a weekly amount; in some cases it might order that a lump sum be given as a loan, to be repaid in weekly instalments. If the workhouse was ordered the applicant could refuse, but would forfeit the right to relief; if he or she accepted the order, he would have to arrange for the security of his belongings as best he could - occasionally the relieving officer was told to look after them - and present himself, with his family if he had any, at the workhouse doors. On the other hand, if outdoor relief was granted he would have to collect it weekly from one of the distribution points, part in cash and part in tickets to be exchanged for bread or flour supplied by a local baker under contract to the Guardians. Of course it was possible to cut corners: the relieving officers, Guardians, Justices of the Peace and parish overseers (who continued to collect the parish poor-rates which financed all this) had powers under the Act to give relief to an applicant in emergency, and masters had similar powers to admit urgent cases to the workhouse; the books could always be put right afterwards. In particular, a relieving officer had discretion to order free treatment by the Union's medical officer for the district; sick paupers were not expected to appear before the Guardians, but lists of those on medical relief were periodically scrutinised to ensure that no-one was included who could afford to pay. Applications for relief might be refused altogether if claimants had the means of subsistence, or had relatives who could be expected to maintain them: the Cambridge Guardians in June 1836 turned down an application from a man whose kinsman had a freehold estate, and in January 1837 the Huntingdon Board stopped giving relief to a pauper with two sons, one of whom "resides with the Bishop of Durham".

Entries in the St. Neots minute book show how all this might work out in practice. In March 1836 the Guardians decided that when hearing applications for relief they would deal with each parish in turn. When considering cases in one relieving officer's district, the other relieving officer would stand at the bottom of the stairs and send the paupers up from the waiting-room as they were called. If a pauper failed to come when his name was called, his case would be dismissed. If there were more than six cases from the same parish, the Guardian representing that parish would be expected to attend; if he did not the cases would be postponed for a week, but the paupers would be paid at the discretion of the relieving officer. The relieving officers were to make out quarterly lists for each parish of all who had received relief, and of the amounts they had been given, and post these on the doors of the parish churches for three successive Sundays. Further regulations were made two months later, when the same Guardians turned their attention to medical relief. The relieving officers were to give each sick pauper an Order authorising a medical officer to attend; this had to be delivered to the medical officer by 9 o'clock next morning if he was to make a call that day and by 9 o'clock on the second morning if he was to attend at all.

The new system could mean a good deal of walking for people whose destitution had put them in need of relief in the first place: far more walking to and fro than had been necessary in the days when each parish had run its own little poor relief scheme. A pauper from Ramsey, for instance, required to appear before the Huntingdon Guardians, faced a ten-mile journey each way. Moreover the Unions commonly had only four, five or six distribution centres for cash and bread as outdoor relief, to which paupers from neighbouring parishes had to resort. The Caxton-and-Arrington Union, advertising in the *Cambridge Independent Press* in July 1835, named Caxton and Eltisley as centres for parishes in the north, Arrington and Gamlingay as centres in the south. The Linton Guardians in July 1835 decided on Linton, Shudy Camps, Duxford, Pampisford, Balsham and West Wrattling as their centres, assigning a few parishes to each in turn. Chesterton Union, which was divided into four districts for the supply of provisions, was taken to task in the *Cambridge Chronicle* of 18 November 1836 for using parish churches as distribution stations.

Bakers supplying bread and flour normally tendered for contracts at three-month intervals; they were expected to attend at the outdoor relief stations, so that paupers could collect cash and food at the same time. Contracts were not automatically renewed, particularly if the Guardians had received complaints from paupers about the food provided. In June 1836 the Linton Guardians dispensed with the services of Mr. Rice after finding the quality of flour he distributed inferior to that submitted with his tender. In the following October the Huntingdon Board cautioned Mr. Watts Nixon for supplying loaves of short weight, and terminated his contract a few weeks later. In September they declined to renew the contract of Mr. Darlow of Buckden, against whom there had been a complaint during the summer that his bread was "sad"; by contrast the St. Neots Guardians consistently awarded him a contract despite investigating an allegation of short-weight in August 1837.

The Poor Law Amendment Act did little to amend the laws on settlement and removal, whereby on claiming relief a pauper could by order of the magistrates be forcibly taken from the parish in which he resided to the one in which - by inheritance or past connection - he 'belonged'.²⁷ It was the parish of settlement which was legally obliged to meet the cost of his relief. The Act forbade removal until the parish of settlement had been decided in law, and to simplify matters abolished a few ways of acquiring settlements, but it still left paupers liable to be carted from place to place, as 32,000 English paupers were in 1840. The hazards of the system are apparent from an entry in the Cambridge minute-book for 16 May 1838: a four-years-old girl whose settlement lay in the parish of St. Mary the Less was brought by wagon from London and left at the door of the Guardians' meeting. They decided to remonstrate with the wagonner - he had acted illegally, without a magistrates' order for the child's removal - but had to place the child in one of the workhouses. More normal cases of removal are frequently encountered in the records: typical examples from the Cambridge minutes of 1837 are those of George Pledger and family from Holy Trinity parish to Chesterford (February) and Widow

Balding from St. Andrew the Less parish to Hempnall in Norfolk (May). But alongside these should be placed cases where - despite the Commissioners' opposition to the practice - paupers were maintained outside the Unions in which their settlements lay; the local Guardians met the immediate cost of relief and claimed it back from the parishes of settlement. In April 1836, for example, Huntingdon Union took responsibility for a man and his family from Shaftesbury, now living in Godmanchester. In September 1837 the St. Neots Guardians arranged a 5s. Od. a week payment to a man and his wife living in the Loughborough Union. The Linton Guardians paid the maintenance of an able-bodied man settled in Weston Colville who entered St. Edward workhouse Cambridge in March 1838. Other paupers were protected against removal through sickness, as they had been in law since 1795. The Cambridge Guardians, for example, in May 1836 ordered Mary Jenkins, 21, and her infant child into their workhouse for the sick, St. Sepulchre, until she was fit enough to be removed to her parish of Rettendon; similarly in November 1837 they ordered a man belonging to South Mimms into St. Sepulchre's. Conversely, in July 1838 they removed John Taylor, 34, "he being in a very dangerous state of health", from his parish of settlement, Holy Trinity, to Fenstanton, so that his friends could look after him: but they obtained a medical officer's note certifying that it was safe to do so. Predictably, removals did not always work. In April 1837 the Cambridge Guardians had to write to Caxton Union complaining that William Gray and his wife Mary, lately removed by order of the magistrates to their parish of Elsworth, had returned to Cambridge; they considered Gray a lunatic, and threatened to place him in an asylum unless the Caxton Guardians would meet the expenses of sending them back.

Paupers might, of course, be only too happy to move, and for those who fancied a new life in the manufacturing districts of the north, or across the oceans in Canada or Australia, money could be found from the poor-rates to help them on their way. The Act of 1834 empowered parishes to use part of their rates for an emigration fund, and between 1835 and 1837 over 4,000 people from Norfolk and Suffolk were helped to leave the country in this way. But very few appear to have gone from Cambridgeshire or Huntingdonshire. By July 1836 15 adults and children from Gamlingay, 20 from Tadlow, 4 from Wimpole, 9 from Buckden and 18 from Tetworth had left for Canada; a year later, another 5 from Landbeach, 24 from Wimpole and 13 from Holywell-cum-Needlingworth had made a similar voyage. The Commissioners' Annual Reports to the Home Secretary continue to give details of numbers emigrating, but none are recorded as having left our counties during the next few years.

Migration to the north appears to have been no more successful. The Commissioners soon appointed agents in Leeds and Manchester to put employers seeking workers in touch with rural Unions in the south of England whose paupers might be willing to travel. But the results were disappointing, despite high hopes in the early days. The *Cambridge Chronicle* of New Year's Day 1836 had a leading article rosily comparing wages in Lancashire at 30s. Od. a week with those in Cambridgeshire, 8s. Od. A fortnight later a letter from a Manchester clergyman put things in perspective: women and children

were needed in the factories at between 6s. Od. and 15s. Od. a week when trained, but men would only find unskilled jobs at between 18s. Od. and 21s. Od. a week; he warned people going north to take funds sufficient to last from four to six weeks. In the event Linton Union had some success early in 1836 in placing two large families from Bartlow Hamlet in Manchester, but two other men from Castle Camps, whose families had been sent after them at parochial expense, returned. In May of the same year the Board refused help to a Shudy Camps man because "his character was not such as to warrant the Board in incurring any expense about him" and others who left about this time to seek work on the railways found it not to their liking. In October 1836 the St. Neots Union submitted lists of paupers who wanted to go north to the migration agent in Leeds, and by the end of the year was able to send two women with their children, possibly the families of men who had gone on ahead at their own cost. But the whole scheme ran into difficulties during the economic depression of 1837-38, when relief had to be allowed to paupers who had fallen out of work in the north, and when some decided to pack up and come home. Huntingdon Union took a fresh interest in January 1839, but the Leeds agent replied that "the contractors had become suddenly full of labourers" and that he was consequently unable to help. Essentially, pauperism was a problem which the counties had to solve for themselves.



Caxton Union Workhouse (to left) as depicted on contemporary postcard. photo: Cambs Collection



Whittlesey Workhouse (now demolished) photo: courtesy of The Whittlesey Society

CHAPTER FIVE

The Outcome

The New Poor Law meant different things to different people. To builders, architects, tradesmen and doctors, it meant contracts to service or supply the new Unions. To Justices of the Peace and parish overseers of the poor, it meant the loss of their traditional authority in the dispensing of relief: even if they became Guardians they were now supposed to follow the directives of the central Commission. To people in need of relief, it meant fear of incarceration in a workhouse, a workhouse which for many would be several miles from their homes; even those on outdoor relief might have to trek a few miles each way, to and from the nearest distribution point. For the reaction of the able-bodied labourers, the people who supposedly had created the problem the New Poor Law had to solve, we can turn to a petition submitted to Parliament in February 1836 by the labourers of Bourn. They may have been helped in the wording by Revd. F. H. Maberly, an agitator against the New Law who lived in Bourn; but this is the nearest we can come to an authentic 'voice of the poor':

"The petitioners, knowing that the farmers have not had the means of paying them if they employed them, have endured many hardships and privations without a murmur, but a most cruel, unnatural and unfeeling power has sprung up with the New Poor Law, which has the effect of lowering the wages of labourers and is in fact grinding them down to the dust. The petitioners say that when out of employment (as they frequently are a long time together) they can get but a very short allowance of bread, no means of paying rent or buying meat, drink or clothing, and must soon therefore be naked and houseless; and after labouring to provide food for all other classes to enjoy, they consider it unfair, unjust and cruel in the extreme for them to be half famished in the midst of plenty. They are dismayed and disgusted beyond anything they can describe, with the idea of being shut up in one part of a prison and their wives and children in other separate parts because they are poor by no fault or act of their own, under the false and deceitful pretence of bettering their conditions. They therefore humbly and respectfully, but firmly and earnestly pray, entreat and implore the house to protect them against such oppression, and they hope the house will consider it one of its first duties to provide such means as will bring fair prices and full employment at fair wages, by which they may earn their livings as they used to, by honest industry according to the station of life they are placed

in, and that the house will forthwith repeal this unfeeling and un-English New Poor Law." ²⁸

The immediate impact of the New Poor Law on the consciousness of a largely-rural community was sharp. It was the argument of the 1834 Report that fear of the workhouse would make labourers less profligate in their spending and far more concerned to find a job, earn good wages and stay in work. Moreover a reformed system would lead to higher wages - because farmers, saving on the rates, could afford to pay more - and to more secure employment - because they would be reluctant to lose a pool of labour to a distant workhouse. In his annual report in July 1836, Assistant Commissioner Power claimed that the results had been as expected: "in consideration...of the improved care and industry of the labourer, the master not only finds it worthwhile to employ him but can afford to give him also a better rate of wages than formerly"; he quoted the submissions of the Linton and Caxton Guardians, given above (pp. 34 to 35), in which both drew attention to the fall in applications for relief and to the greater respect shown by workers to their employers. The St. Ives Guardians, nearly all farmers, followed this up in March 1837 by submitting a memorial to the Home Secretary expressing their general satisfaction:

"The board is enabled from practical experience and observation to state to your Lordship that the condition of the aged and infirm poor within it has been ameliorated and that a beneficial change is gradually developing itself amongst all classes of its paupers, and that a very great benefit and saving of expense has accrued to the ratepayers... And there are but few able-bodied men in the Union now out of employ although prior to the formation of the Union a great number of able-bodied men were receiving parochial relief...your memorialists feel assured that the poor of this Union in general are since the formation much improved in their morals and habits." ²⁹

On the other hand, not everyone was impressed by the new demeanour of the agricultural workers; the *Cambridge Chronicle*, a Tory newspaper which took every opportunity to attack the New Poor Law, called this "much be-praised civility" "nothing else but sullen doggedness and silent despair". And in truth there was beneath the surface sufficient class-hatred to sustain a major political campaign against the New Law and provoke occasional outbreaks of violence. The campaign was conducted by the clergyman from Bourn, Revd. F. H. Maberly, who held a series of mass meetings in Bourn, Cambridge, Royston, Huntingdon, Ely, Littleport, Saffron Walden, St. Neots, St. Ives and Linton during the summer of 1836. His speeches attacked the New Law as tyrannical - allowing the Poor Law Commissioners to frame

regulations without reference to parliament - antisciptural - because work-houses separated man and wife - and tending both to the depression of wages and to greater unemployment. The last two points went clean contrary to the doctrine of the 1834 Report, but Maberly claimed, first that in fear of the work-house labourers were prepared to accept lower wages than before, and second that farmers who previously had made only partial savings by dismissing their workers - because they had still had to support them through the poor-rates - could now lay off with impunity knowing that the men would be loath to apply for relief. It was customary to end Maberly's meetings with signatures to a petition calling for the repeal of the Act, and with a procession through the town. Although local magistrates were frequently alarmed by the gatherings - 25 Metropolitan Police and 20 special constables under the Lord Lieutenant attended the meeting at Royston on 22 June 1836 - Maberly usually restrained the crowds from serious violence. In August some of the St. Neots Guardians were in the mood to resign after they and one of their relieving officers had been attacked by a crowd of Maberly's supporters; in the following month Thomas Thurnall, relieving officer with the Chesterton Union, suffered when he met one of Maberly's processions in Magdalene Street, Cambridge. But these incidents were exceptional; Maberly was personally opposed to the use of violence, and helped to disperse a mob which gathered outside the Crown Inn Caxton to disrupt a Guardians' meeting in August 1836. His campaign lay dormant during the winter of 1836-37, and came to an end after a poorly-attended assembly in the rain on Parker's Piece in Cambridge in April 1837.

Other violent episodes in the two counties included the window-breaking at the new Linton workhouse in November 1836, already referred to, and an attack on the old Huntingdon workhouse in Priory Lane in April of the same year. Following the introduction of partial relief in kind, a crowd of about 50 men and women broke up a Guardians' meeting with a demand for relief "in coin as usual and not in bread". The nucleus came from Godmanchester, where the members of a sickness-benefit club had drunk up the remaining funds in the belief that the Board would not grant relief to anyone who also received benefit from the club. According to *The Times* of 16 April 1836:

"the guardians...deemed it more prudent to effect a safe retreat through the windows of their apartment than to come at once into collision with a drunken and infuriated mob...the relieving officer had the presence of mind to secure the books, and thus armed accompanied the guardians."

The mob dispersed when 25 special constables arrived and the Riot Act was read.

This hostility, however, was less serious than that which greeted the New Poor Law in other parts of the country. The focus of political opposition shifted in 1837 to industrial Lancashire and Yorkshire, where Guardians were

commonly returned as "anti-Poor Law" candidates and where - particularly in the area north and east of Manchester - some parishes refused to elect Guardians at all.³⁰ The incidents at Huntingdon and Linton were pale stuff compared to the violence elsewhere in East Anglia: in December 1836 mobs partially demolished one of the Ipswich Union workhouses, attacked several others in east Suffolk, and put to flames those at Bishop's Stortford and Saffron Walden. Nor, after the brief flurry in 1836, was the opposition sustained; thanks partly to a good harvest in 1835 and partly to the flexible administration of outdoor relief (despite central pressure) in Unions such as Chesterton and Huntingdon, the new system came to be accepted without undue disturbance.

When all is said, the New Poor Law can be counted a success in its primary objective of reducing the rates. There can be no doubt that there was a fall in applications for relief after 1834, and hence a saving in the cost of poor relief: a 30% saving in both Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire if the amounts spent in the years ending 25 March 1834 and 25 March 1839 are compared. The consequent saving on the rates helped to reconcile those tenant-farmers and landowners who, whether on economic, humanitarian or political grounds, had originally been doubtful about the New Law: the tenant-farmers because they paid the rates, the absentee landowners because they could charge higher rents as the poor-rates fell. What is more, most of the local Unions were able to maintain this saving. Comparative figures for poor relief expenditure in each of the Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire Unions³¹ show that by the 1870s the amounts spent in poor relief per head of population in the Cambridge, North Witchford and Whittlesey Unions had climbed back to their pre-1834 levels; but all the others except Wisbech were spending about the same per head of population as they had done in 1838.

Union	Average annual expenditure on poor before formation of Union	1838		1850		1874	
		Pop. in 1831 census	Amount spent on poor in year ending 25 March	Pop. in 1851 census	Amount spent on poor in year ending 25 March	Pop. in 1871 census	Amount spent on poor in year ending 25 March
Cambridge	£9,907	20,917	£5,359	27,815	£11,059	30,078	£15,340
Caxton-and-Arrington	£6,384	8,946	£5,018	11,065	£5,918	11,661	£6,041
Chesterton	£12,297	19,151	£9,148	25,170	£12,701	27,948	£12,173
Ely	£13,777	17,327	£6,125	22,896	£6,632	22,284	£8,266
Linton	£10,547	11,587	£7,674	14,148	£9,035	13,768	£8,266
North							
Witchford	£6,726	12,663	£3,976	16,243	£6,967	15,585	£7,600
Whittlesey	£4,010	6,019	£1,753	7,687	£2,657	7,002	£4,056
Wisbech	£17,386	27,823	£11,484	36,215	£19,394	34,209	£17,762
Huntingdon	£11,785	16,859	£8,653	20,900	£9,472	20,711	£9,541
St. Ives	£11,235	17,261	£7,419	20,594	£6,760	18,824	£7,726
St. Neots	£13,969	16,380	£7,480	18,825	£8,752	18,511	£6,532

Doubtless the poor-rates would have gone down in any case, as agricultural labourers showed an increasing readiness to move to the industrial areas in search of work from the 1840s onwards; the declining populations of many Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire villages during the second half of the century is sufficient indication of the extent of the migration. But the New Poor Law must have persuaded at least some of them to go, rather than apply for poor relief as their fathers might have done.

On the other hand, if the rates came down, there is little reason to believe that wages went up, at least in the few years under study here. Despite the conflicting claims made in 1836 by Assistant Commissioner Power and Revd. Maberly, the New Poor Law seems to have had no more than a marginal effect on wage-levels. Neither produced figures from Cambridgeshire to support his case. The nearest Power came in his annual report for 1836 was to include a submission by a relieving officer in Biggleswade Union that weekly wages had either stayed constant or had risen by a shilling to 8s. Od. - in this case partly because of the increased price of bread. Power's successor Colonel Wade, looking back in 1839 on a year of food shortages and consequent high prices, reported that some employers had raised their wages to meet them but others had not - compelling their men to apply for poor relief just as before. Nor is there much indication that - either for humanitarian or for economic reasons - farmers were any less disposed to put their men out of work. In his 1836 report, Assistant Commissioner Adey, whose district included Huntingdonshire, agreed with Power that more work had been available - but the year past had been one of a good harvest and mild weather. Assistant Commissioner Kay, who covered Norfolk and Suffolk, told a Parliamentary Select Committee in March 1838 that he thought labourers now earned more taking the year as a whole, not because their weekly wages were higher but because they were more regularly employed.³² Yet by then the severe weather of January and February 1838 - when so many had been put out of work that every Union in Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire had been obliged to offer outdoor relief to the able-bodied - had already shown the weakness of the Commissioners' case.

When it came to the crunch, farmers reacted not according to the doctrines of the Poor Law Commission but according to past habits and their own self-interest. So did the Guardians, many of them farmers employing the very people liable to be in need of relief, and some with experience of the old poor law as overseers in the parishes they now represented. They tended to apply the new system according to their own convictions. Where the poor rates had been high, the need for drastic reform was fully appreciated. The parish of Linton, for example, had been castigated by Alfred Power for the prevalence of its pauperism in his evidence to the Royal Commission; but it had of its own accord introduced a deterrent workhouse and so greatly reduced the number of able-bodied applicants for relief, by the time that the Report was published.³³ The Guardians representing Linton doubtless helped persuade their colleagues on the Board of Linton Union of the advantages of the system, with the result that a resolution to forbid outdoor relief to the able-bodied had been passed by the end of 1837. By contrast, where Guardians were not convinced

of the merits of the new policy - where, as in Chesterton, Union, they continued to prefer the short-term expedient of tiding a family over a lean spell to the absolute prohibition of outdoor relief to the able-bodied - it was very difficult for the Commissioners to enforce their will. In the long run, this more flexible approach would prevail. By 1847 Caxton-and-Arrington Union had received official permission to give outdoor relief to able-bodied men and their families in return for some suitable task-work, as an alternative to admission to the workhouse; by 1871 all the local Unions except St. Neots and Whittlesey had a similar right in times of emergency when the workhouses might be full to apply this 'Outdoor Labour Test'. Families could be helped, in other words, without being forced into the workhouse.³⁴ Ultimately it would be the 'impotent poor' who would feel the impact of the New Poor Law most severely. As the century wore on, the old, the sick, and orphaned, abandoned or illegitimate children formed an increasing proportion of those in receipt of both indoor and outdoor relief. To cite an example from the Admission-and-Discharge Book for the St. Ives Union, there were in the workhouse on 21 January 1879 only 14 able-bodied men and as many able-bodied women out of a total of 134 inmates; of the remainder, 38 were children, including several born in the workhouse to unmarried mothers, 14 elderly women and 54 elderly men. These were the people who had to suffer the restrictions and inconveniences of a system which had been designed with others in mind.

What was really needed in 1834 was a tightening up on the indiscriminate granting of poor relief in parishes such as Bottisham, Over and Gamlingay, all cited in the Royal Commission Report for their profligacy in doling out generous sums of money to able-bodied men who did little or no work; the result, according to the parish overseer in Bottisham, had been that the labourers had acquired a "growing indifference, or rather partiality, to being thrown on the parish: when the bad season is coming on, they frequently dispose of any little property, such as a cow or a pig, in order to entitle themselves to parish wages". But parishes had already shown themselves quite capable of putting their own houses in order: those such as Cookham (Berkshire) and Hatfield (Hertfordshire) which had reduced the rates by setting the able-bodied to work at lower rates than the prevailing wages, were mentioned in glowing terms.³⁵ The Report also included in an appendix the replies to questionnaires circulated to parishes, from which it is clear that several in Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire were coping satisfactorily with their poor relief problems. Godmanchester, for example, had reduced the rates through the establishment of a 'select vestry', a small committee of leading farmers and tradesmen who vetted each application for relief with care. Huntingdon St. John's had also brought the rates down, following the recent appointment of a salaried 'assistant overseer' to administer relief in the parish.³⁶ It was a cumbersome step to reform those parishes where abuses were rife by imposing the whole apparatus of the New Poor Law on 'good' and 'bad' alike - forcing the ones which felt the problem to be under control to abide by policies dictated from above. Guardians differed in their experiences of the old poor law, and hence they differed in their attitudes to the new. It was this diversity of experience which would frustrate the attempt to impose a uniform system of relief.

APPENDIX

- ¹ D. Roberts 'How Cruel was the Victorian Poor Law?' in *Historical Journal*, vi (1963) and U. Henriques, 'How Cruel was the Poor Law?', *ibid.*, xi (1968).
- ² *Report from the Commissioners on the Poor Laws, (1834) Appendix A, Part I*, p.682A.
- ³ M. Blaug: 'The Myth of the Old Poor Law and the Making of the New' and 'The Poor Law Report Re-examined' in *Journal of Economic History*, xxiii (1963) and xxiv (1964).
- ⁴ A. J. Peacock: *Bread or Blood* (London 1965), E.J. Hobsbawm and G. Rude: *Captain Swing* (London, 1969) esp. pp. 146-48, 165-67.
- ⁵ *Report from the Commissioners on the Poor Laws, Appendix A, Part I*, pp. 246A-49A, 258A-60A, 593A.
- ⁶ The Union Chargeability Act of 1865 replaced this by a common rating on all parishes in a Union.
- ⁷ *Second Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners (1836), Appendix B*, p. 251. Cf. *Cambridge Independent Press*, 16/1/36, for a speech by the chairman of the Isle of Ely quarter sessions deploring the criminal record of Whittlesey, where from 46 recent cases of felony and misdemeanour there had been only two convictions.
- ⁸ The minute-book records that there had been contests in St. Neots, Tetworth, Abbotsley, Waresley, Eynesbury, Southoe, Buckden and for two seats in Eaton Socon, but not in Toseland, Great Paxton, Little Paxton, Hail Weston, Diddington, Great Staughton, Graffham, and Graveley.
- ⁹ *Star in the East*, 1/4/37.
- ¹⁰ *Star in the East*, 5/5/38, 12/5/38, 26/5/38, 9/6/38, 23/6/38.
- ¹¹ *Report of the Poor Law Commissioners on the Further Amendment of the Poor Laws (1840), Appendix B*, pp. 158-61, 166-67.
- ¹² As an example, Caxton-and-Arrington Union, where the average annual poor-rates had totalled £6027 in the three years 1832-35, was authorised to spend £5367 on a new workhouse for 160 paupers.
- ¹³ Cambridge minute-books, 17/8/36, 19/10/36, 2/11/36, 24/1/38.
- ¹⁴ *Second Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners*, p.233.
- ¹⁵ *Star in the East*, 4/2/37, 11/2/37, 18/2/37, 22/4/37.
- ¹⁶ *Gardner's Directory of Cambridgeshire* (1851), p.168; *Hatfield's Directory of Huntingdonshire* (1854), pp. 194, 409.
- ¹⁷ In 1842 the ages were modified so that boys and girls both became able-bodied adults at 15: parents were also allowed to see their children once a day.
- ¹⁸ T. Carlyle, *Past and Present*, ('Shilling Edition', London, 1891), p.2.

¹⁹ A. Digby: 'The Labour Market and Continuity of Social Policy after 1834: The Case of the Eastern Counties' in *Economic History Review*, 2nd series, xxviii (1975), and in D. Fraser (ed.): *The New Poor Law in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1976), pp. 149-70.

²⁰ *Second Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners, Appendix B*, pp. 233-35.

²¹ Compare decisions on relief to able-bodied men and their families recorded in the Cambridge minute-books on 27/4/36, 11/1/37, 5/4/37, 20/9/37 and 17/1/38.

²² *Abstract of Returns..showing..Relaxations made in the peremptory Orders forbidding Outdoor Relief to Able-bodied Labourers and their families (1838)*, pp. 23-24.

²³ *Fifth Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners, (1839)*, p.3.

²⁴ E.g. Cambridge minute-books for 19/10/36, 25/1/37, 24/5/37, 9/8/37, Linton minute-books for 21/4/36, 23/6/36, 3/11/36.

²⁵ *Report from the Commissioners on the Poor Laws, Appendix A, Part I*, pp. 257A-262A.

²⁶ *Return showing number of indoor and outdoor paupers - 1839 and 1840*: p.2.

²⁷ On the settlement and removal law, see Fraser, *op.cit.*, pp. 25-44.

²⁸ *Cambridge Chronicle*, 18/2/37.

²⁹ *Cambridge Chronicle* 1/1/37, but mentioned in the Guardians' minute-book on 28 March 1837.

³⁰ N.C. Edsall, *The Anti-Poor Law Movement* (Manchester, 1971).

³¹ *Fourth Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners (1838)*: pp. 38-39, *Return of the number of Paupers - and the cost of Relief, 1850, 1860, 1870, 1874*: pp. 21-23.

³² Kay claimed that wages had increased "if by wages is understood...the annual amount of the income of the labourer from employment" (*Report of Parliamentary Select Committee to inquire into the Administration of the Relief of the Poor, 1837-38*: evidence of 13 March 1838, pp. 26-28.)

³³ *First Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners, Appendix B*, p.139.

³⁴ S. and B. Webb: *English Poor Law Policy* (London, 1910), pp. 321-42.

³⁵ *The Poor Law Report of 1834*, ed. S.G. and E.O.A. Checkland (1974) pp. 102, 108, 227-8.

³⁶ *Report from the Commissioners on the Poor Laws, Appendix A, Part I*, pp. 691A-92A.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abstract of Returns..showing..Relaxations made in the peremptory Orders forbidding Outdoor Relief to Able-bodied Labourers and their families (1838): (Parliamentary) (Papers) 1837-38, XXXVIII.

M. Blaug: 'The Myth of the Old Poor Law and the Making of the New' in *Journal of Economic History*, xxiii (1963).

M. Blaug: 'The Poor Law Report Re-examined' in *Journal of Economic History*, xxiv (1964).

Cambridge Chronicle, 1836-39.

Cambridge Independent Press, 1835-36.

Cambridge Union: Guardians' Minute Books, 1836-39: Cambs. C.R.O. G/C/AM 1,2,3,4,5. Agreement, plans, specifications for new workhouse, 1837: Cambs. C.R.O. G/C/AP 16.

T. Carlyle: *Past and Present* ('Shilling Edition', London, 1891).

Chesterton Union: Guardians' Minute Books, 1836-39: Cambs. C.R.O. G/Ch/AM 1,2. Plans of proposed workhouse, c.1836: Cambs C.R.O. G/Ch/AP 1,2,3.

A. Digby: 'The Labour Market and Continuity of Social Policy after 1834' in *Economic History Review*, 2nd series, xxviii (1975).

N.C. Edsall: *The Anti-Poor Law Movement* (Manchester, 1971).

Fifth Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners (1839): PP 1839, XX.

First Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners (1835): PP 1835, XXXV.

Fourth Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners (1838): PP 1837-38, XXVIII.

D. Fraser (ed.): *The New Poor Law in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1976).

Gardner's Directory of Cambridgeshire (1851).

Hatfield's Directory of Huntingdonshire (1854).

U. Henriques, 'How Cruel was the Poor Law?' in *Historical Journal*, xi (1968).

E.J. Hobsbawm and G. Rude: *Captain Swing* (London, 1969).

Huntingdon Union: Guardians' Minute-Books, 1836-38: Hunts. C.R.O. 1844/1, 2.

Linton Union: Guardians' Minute-Books, 1835-39: Cambs. C.R.O. G/L/AM 1,2. Agreement for erection of workhouse, 1836: Cambs. C.R.O. G/L/AP 1A. Plans of workhouse, c.1836: Cambs. C.R.O. G/L/AP 2.

Ordnance Survey: first edition 25": 1 mile; Cambs, Hunts, Norfolk (1876-87).

A.J. Peacock: *Bread or Blood* (London, 1965).

Poor Law Report of 1834, ed. S.G. and E.O.A. Checkland (London, 1974).

Report from the Commissioners on the Poor Laws (1834): Appendix A, Part I: PP 1834, XXVIII.

Report of the Parliamentary Select Committee to inquire into the Administration of the Relief of the Poor (1837-38): PP 1837-38, XVIII, Part I.

Report of the Poor Law Commissioners on the Further Amendment of the Poor Laws (1840): PP 1840, XVII.

Return of the number of Paupers.. and the Cost of Relief, 1850, 1860, 1870, 1874: PP 1876, LXIII.

Return showing number of indoor and outdoor paupers... 1839 and 1840: PP 1841, XXI.

D. Roberts: 'How Cruel was the Victorian Poor Law?' in *Historical Journal*, VI (1963).

St. Ives Union: Guardians' Minute-Books, 1836-39: Hunts. C.R.O. 2178/1/1,2. Admission and Discharge Book, 1879: Hunts. C.R.O. 2178/3/13.

St. Neots Union: Guardians' Minute-Books, 1835-42: Hunts. C.R.O. 1846/1,2.

Second Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners (1836): PP 1836, XXIX, Part I.

Star in the East, 1837-38.

The Times, 1836.

S. and B. Webb: *English Poor Law Policy* (London, 1910).